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When State Propaganda Becomes Social Knowledge:  
Legacies of the Southern Republic

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to explain the discursive origin, development, and transformation of “Republican anticommunism,” and how and why this state-originated ideology continues to shape Vietnamese exile communities today. The dissertation focuses on examining mechanisms that allows certain narratives produced by the Republic of Vietnam to persist, despite the regime changes, turmoil, war, and, ultimately, state collapse that characterizes Vietnamese Republican history (1955-1975). The dissertation explores the unstudied “Political Study Program” *Chương Trình Học Tập Chính Trị* (PSP) of the Republican government and examines its operations and ideological messaging throughout duration of the Republican era. Focusing on three state-derived Republican anticommunist narratives (Narrative of the Geneva Accords, Anti-Neutrality, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment), the dissertation demonstrates how ideas once articulated as propaganda by the Republican state becomes a widely deployed form of “social knowledge” drawn upon by state and non-state actors alike. The dissertation, firstly, highlights the efforts of the Republican state to “cultivate,” develop, and disseminate an anticommunist political culture. Secondly, the project historically documents how these ideas were creatively reconfigured by diverse actors across the Republican era. Lastly, it traces the migration of these state-derived ideas following the Fall of Saigon (1975) and examines how Republican anticommunism was reconstituted in the formation of Vietnamese America. Alongside providing one of the first comprehensive political and social history of the Vietnamese Republican era, the dissertation critically analyzes the historical process has led to the creation of an anticommunist Vietnamese community overseas. It, furthermore, advances a new theoretical paradigm that views the historical significance of South Vietnam through its prevailing legacy on present day Vietnamese exile communities. At its crux, the dissertation demonstrates how state-derived ideas, forms of identification, and discourses can survive long after the state that progenerated them had fallen.

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## PREFACE

The idea behind this dissertation emerged out of my own upbringings as a member of the “Vietnamese American community.” Most stark and remarkable about such an upbringing was the fervent, passionate, and, at times, rigid politics of anticommunism that pervades not only public events or social gatherings, but also conversations within homes, between parents and child, the elderly and the younger generation. In 2015, I conducted couple dozen oral history interviews with members within my community (veterans of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam) and found stark commonalities between their tales. It was less the personal or historical contents of these tales that intrigued me, but rather the similarities in how each individual interpreted events and historical developments of which they were a part. This led me down a path to understanding this shared set of interpretation as a “discourse”—a collective, prevalent, dominant mode of viewing the political world in its past, present, and future. And into the rabbit hole I went.

In 2018, I traveled (rather, returned) to Vietnam to conduct dissertation research. At that point, I knew that I wanted to explore how this body of political knowledge had been constructed and how it was disseminated to the point in which it became prevalent. My research centered primarily around Vietnam National Archive II and the General Science Library located in downtown Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). I poured over voluminous archival materials, at first, seeking anything related to “political education” or “civic education” during the Republican era in South Vietnam (1955-1975). It was then that I happened upon what this dissertation calls the “Political Study Program” (PSP). I discovered a pattern of routine “study” within the Republican government’s bureaucracy and traced the source of telegrams, memos, dispatches, and letters to the Ministry of Information—arguably the most powerful governmental organ of the Republican state. I found related “study materials” assigned monthly to civil servants and soldiers. I pieced together the three narratives of the Geneva Accords, Anti-Neutrality, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment which will be discussed at length in this dissertation. I probed the political discussions occurring within broader society, dwelling into contemporary newspapers, journals, textbooks and the like and found resonances between state-originated texts and that of wider public conversations. Some of these materials were self-purchased from local bookstores selling “old” books, and others I found through the Interlibrary Loan system. I traced the narratives, terminologies, and interpretations discovered during my investigation of the Republican “past” to the political discourse of anticommunism in the Vietnamese American “present.” Here, I dove into the plethora of political journals, pamphlets, and tracts developed by Vietnamese American organizations over the years. What I found was stark continuities in how historical events were interpreted, the terminologies that were used, and the significance of ideological content in how Vietnamese Americans narrated their collective identity, their loss of homeland, and their relationship to the fallen Republic of Vietnam.

As such, the writing of this dissertation was very much guided by the question of ideological “continuity”: why ideas persist, despite happenings that would predict otherwise (regime changes, revolutions, collapse of state), and what are the mechanisms that allow such “continuity” to occur. I found that part of the answer lies in “change.” The ideological narratives discussed in this dissertation did not remain exactly as it did when originally devised under the First Republic of Vietnam (1955-1963). Rather, these narratives were modified, edited, and

changed over the course of their existence. That is, the survival of these narratives was a result of the ability of “old” ideas to be adapted and retooled to serve the interests of new actors and to cope with new developments and challenges. I found that these state-derived narratives have a significance beyond their “political” worth, and that these narratives spoke emotionally and morally to those who deploy them. Indeed, the attachment to these narratives were quite passionate and ardent; they gave inspiration and justification for men and women to not only die for these ideas, but kill for them. I found that efforts across Vietnamese Republican and Vietnamese American history to disseminate, reinforce, and propagate these ideas transformed them into a “hegemonic” way of interpreting reality. As a hegemonic force, anticommunism influenced not only the politics of South Vietnam and Vietnamese America, but it had also seeped into the cultural, artistic, and literary foundations of these communities and dictated how these communities define identity and belonging.

This dissertation, fundamentally, is an attempt to explain how “Republican anticommunism” became such a powerful and dominating force. As a comprehensive and systematic ideology, Republican anticommunism did not exist prior to 1955, but now is at the epicenter of politics within Vietnamese America. Since 1976, Vietnamese Americans had congregated every year to mourn April 30<sup>th</sup>—the date marking the fall of Saigon. Throughout the history of the community, journalists had been assassinated for supposedly expressing “communist sympathies,” families had poured thousands of dollars into political organizations promising to “Restore the Nation,” and Vietnamese Americans had held public figures and representatives of their community to ideological account. Those who counteracted or opposed the politics of anticommunism had been met with condemnation, protests, death threats, and violence. While existing as a discourse discoverable upon the words within a text, anticommunism has real consequences in how people act in and engage with the socio-political world.

On the one hand, this dissertation is a “historical” project and empirically builds from traditional primary sources. It contributes a novel political and social history to understudied aspects of Vietnamese Studies. On the other hand, however, the dissertation speaks to something quite “sociological,” in that it seeks to theoretically explain the existence and transformation of a phenomenon in the social world. Here, my training in sociology was invaluable for interpreting and articulating why it is that Republican anticommunism has the effects and consequences that it did in South Vietnam and Vietnamese America. This dissertation does not necessarily advance a new “theory” about ideology or societal development. Rather, it advocates for a new way of studying and viewing an exile community by taking into serious consideration of the national formation processes within the society from which these migrants originate. This dissertation is not speaking of some “primordial” traditional values that migrants bring with them to their new world. The focus of this dissertation will be the construction of a modern, “nationalistic,” Vietnamese political culture which emerged through postcolonial state-formation during the Cold War. This dissertation will argue that it was this “political culture” that migrated with the Vietnamese refugees following 1975, and it was this “political culture” that eventually shaped Vietnamese exile formation overseas.

Some perhaps will find dimensions of the Republican anticommunist politics that this dissertation discusses “repulsive,” or “conservative,” or “reactionary.” Others will perhaps find that the story I tell is too critical or that the dissertation casts South Vietnam and Vietnamese

America in a negative or unsympathetic light. Some may find the history of Republican anticommunism as “irrelevant,” or something that belongs to a foregone past. However, as someone who had grown up with the Vietnamese American community and have witnessed the anticommunist politics of the community firsthand, the research and writing of this dissertation has provided me a lens that answered questions about the community’s origins, its past, its transformations, and its (possible) futures. I hope that this dissertation will provide those of my generation a similar vantage—a vantage into not only what the Vietnamese American community was or is, but also what the community *can be*. The construction of this dissertation was also an opportunity for me to confront and reflect upon the nature of the community’s politics, question the limits and possibilities of dominating ideas, and probe at the “taken-for-granted” stories and beliefs which lay at the core of a Vietnamese refugee identity.

It has been quite a journey for me to write this dissertation. For my readers (particularly those who are Vietnamese Americans), I hope to take you on that journey in part.

Y Thien Nguyen  
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## DEDICATIONS

For my family, my community, and the homeland they left behind.

Cho gia đình, cho đồng bào, và quê hương.

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## INTRODUCTION

On a Saturday morning in October of 2020, Vietnamese American supporters of Biden-Harris ticket organized a public event at Catinat Plaza in Westminster, CA. For such an event, there were, of course, Vietnamese-translated campaign signs bearing familiar slogans such as Build Back Better, #SaveDemocracy, and their Vietnamese-language renditions (such as “Xây Dựng Lại, Tốt Đẹp Hơn”).<sup>1</sup> However, this demonstration of support for the Democratic ticket was, perhaps, unique in that, for an event representing the more liberal and progressive strains in American politics, it integrated a Vietnamese American symbol that has long signified the conservative, anticommunist politics of the community: namely, the former national flag of the Republic of Vietnam. Since its first adoption by the California cities of Westminster and Garden Grove in 2003, the “Vietnamese Freedom and Heritage Flag” has now become a universally recognized symbol of Vietnamese communities overseas. Vietnamese American deployment of this “golden yellow”<sup>2</sup> flag has been historically diverse, representing not only Vietnamese American political allegiances, but also the community’s culture, music, and South Vietnamese past. However, as a community known for its ties to the Republican and white conservatism, Vietnamese Americans have rarely deployed the flag in support of the Democratic Party or progressive causes. And such a contradiction, inevitably, resulted in confrontation.



Source: Người Việt Daily News.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Tuần hành ủng hộ liên danh Biden-Harris tại Little Saigon, Nam California,” *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 11, 2020. < <https://www.sbtn.tv/tuan-hanh-ung-ho-lien-danh-biden-harris-tai-little-saigon-nam-california/>>; Cát Linh and Đặng Giao, “Nhiều Người Việt ở Mỹ xuống đường ủng hộ Biden-Harris,” *Người Việt Daily News*, Oct. 11, 2020; Lê Trung, “Biểu tình tuần hành ủng hộ liên danh Joe Biden and Kamala Harris,” *Trẻ Magazine*, Oct. 23, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> “Golden yellow” was the adjective used to describe the “Freedom and Heritage Flag” in H.C.R. NO. 258 by the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature of the State of Texas in May, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Cát Linh, “‘Fan’ Biden và ‘Fan’ Trump gốc Việt tuần hành nhiều nơi tại Mỹ,” *Người Việt Daily News*, Oct 24, 2020.

Angry, loud, and heckling, the Trump supporters approached from the plaza's parking lot. They demonized the Biden supporters as "Vietnamese traitors," "communists," and "dogs." They claimed that Biden supporters "ate the nation's rice but pray to the communist's ghost" *ăn cơm quốc gia mà thờ ma cộng sản*. They equated the Democratic Party with the Communist Party in Vietnam and argued that just as the Democratic Party had "sold out" Vietnam during the war, the Democrats would similarly "sell America to the Chinese communists." The atmosphere in Catinat Plaza that Saturday was intense. *Viet Bao* reports that "if not for the [presence of] the police, altercations could have turned violent."<sup>4</sup> As the Biden supporter began marching from Catinat Plaza down Bolsa Street, Trump supporters pushed into the organizing area of their opponents originally sealed off by yellow caution tape, "their hands bearing [their own yellow] flags and slogans...as if occupying the territory of the enemy."<sup>5</sup> A Trump supporter, interviewed following the confrontation, argues that the Biden supporter's use of the "flag of national righteousness" *cờ chính nghĩa quốc gia* distorts its true meaning. That flag, according to the speaker, was to represent the anticommunist cause. As Biden and Harris were "defenders of China," those who are voting Biden have no right to deploy that sacred symbol of the nation.<sup>6</sup>

Public display of support for the Republican ticket amongst Vietnamese Americans has grown increasingly rampant in the months leading up to the 2020 election. In August, Vietnamese American Trump supporters in San Jose organized a "cross country caravan" to travel to Washington DC in support of the Republican ticket. Arriving on the 15, they confronted anti-Trump protesters who stood in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. A shouting match ensued between those who lambasted "God Damn Donald Trump" and those Vietnamese Americans who called for "Four More Years."<sup>7</sup> In the month of September, Vietnamese Americans residents in Little Saigon, CA—the "Capitol" of the Vietnamese overseas community—hosted nearly weekly rallies of hundreds in support of Trump. In October, Vietnamese American Trump supporters organized another cross-country trip, deeming it "Trump Journey MAGA 2020." This time beginning in Southern California, the "caravan" stopped at numerous Vietnamese American centers along the way, including Houston, New Orleans, Biloxi, Atlanta, and Falls Church. Arriving in Washington DC on the 14<sup>th</sup>, a mass of some 1,500 Vietnamese American Trump supporters marched alongside the capitol's greens, bearing "Trump 2020" signs and slogans supporting conservative causes.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Thanh Huy, "Biểu Tình Tuần Hành Ủng Hộ Cựu Phó Tổng Thống Joe Biden và Thượng Nghị Sĩ Kamala Harris," *Việt Báo*, Oct. 12, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Cát Linh and Đăng Giao, "Nhiều Người Việt ở Mỹ xuống đường ủng hộ Biden-Harris," *Người Việt Daily News*, Oct. 11, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> "Cờ vàng ủng hộ Biden đung cờ vàng ủng hộ Trump trên đường Bolsa, ông quét rác nói gì?" *PhoBolsaTV*, Oct. 10, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> "Hành trình xuyên Mỹ của những người ủng hộ Tổng Thống Trump," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Aug. 12, 2020; "Tuần hành vận động cho Tổng Thống Trump ở Virginia," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Aug. 16; "Cuộc đối đầu của nhóm ủng hộ & phản đối TT Trump trước Tòa Bạch Ốc," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Aug. 18, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> "Diễn hành xe ủng hộ Tổng Thống Trump & cảnh sát tại Nam California," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 4, 2020; "Houston chào đón đoàn hành trình từ California đến Washington DC," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 7, 2020; "New Orleans & Biloxi chào đón đoàn hành trình từ California đến Washington DC," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 10, 2020; "Tuần hành ủng hộ TT Trump trong khu trung tâm Thương Mại Eden," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 12, 2020; "Tuần hành ủng hộ Tổng Thống Donald Trump trước Tòa Bạch Ốc," *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 14, 2020.

These organized events followed in the wake of Vietnamese American activism combating California Governor Newsom’s shut down of the California economy at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, too, the “golden yellow” flag flew within the midst of the MAGA hat-wearing, largely white protest that erupted in front of California State Capitol in Sacramento.<sup>9</sup> Here, Vietnamese American concerns targeted the closure of nail salons—an industry that Vietnamese Americans have historically dominated.<sup>10</sup> As the murder of George Floyd sparked the nationwide Black Lives Matter movement, progressives in the community joined in solidarity with protestors, reappropriating that “golden yellow” to march against systemic racism and police brutality.<sup>11</sup> Conservatives in the community, on the other hand, focused on the “looting and violence” and rallied in support of “law enforcement.”<sup>12</sup> They attacked Vietnamese American public figures who came out in support of Black Lives Matter. Andover representative Trâm Nguyễn and Houston entrepreneur Lê Hoàng Nguyễn, for example, faced online harassment and death threats from thousands who labeled them “communists” and called for them to be “hanged.”<sup>13</sup>

For Vietnamese Americans Trump supporters, amongst the key reasons argued against the Democratic ticket is the belief that Joe Biden would somehow “sell” the United States over China if he were to be elected. In some ways, the politics and discourses deployed by the conservative forces within the Vietnamese American community can be read as a reflection of the rhetoric deployed by the Trump campaign. Trump and his campaign, in numerous occasions, had pushed the notion that Biden was somehow bound to China. “If Joe Biden ever gets elected,” the President had declared in one press briefing, “China will own America.”<sup>14</sup> This argument, as presented through conservative media, rests on the premise that Biden’s son, Hunter Biden, had murky business dealings in China, made millions, and, ultimately, “served the ‘strategic interests’ of the country’s communist government and military.”<sup>15</sup> Implicitly, the narrative pushes the idea that Biden is politically compromised and, due to his son, is beholden to the Chinese government. In Vietnamese America, such a claim is appended upon allegations that Biden’s domestic agenda is socialistic, and his foreign policy positions would economically benefit the Chinese communists. Alongside these claims, voices within Vietnamese America reflect the wider rightwing discourse that depicts Trump as a warrior defending American jobs

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<sup>9</sup> “Biểu tình chống lệnh cách ly ở Sacramento,” *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, May 25, 2020; Terry Huy Nguyen, “Biểu Tình Lớn ở Thủ Phủ Sacramento California,” *Trust Media Network*, May 23, 2020, <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vthe\\_nu0PkU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vthe_nu0PkU)>.

<sup>10</sup> Cát Linh, “Pro Nails Association sẽ ‘kiện Thống Đốc Newsom’ đòi lại công bằng cho ngành nail,” *Người Việt*, Jun 7, 2020; Cát Linh, “Little Saigon: Đại diện ngành nail biểu tình, khởi kiện thống đốc California,” *Người Việt*, Jun. 8, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Tạ Phong Tần, “‘BLM’ ở Little Saigon,” *Trẻ Magazine*, June 29, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> “Người Việt tham gia biểu tình ủng hộ cảnh sát ở Portland,” *VOA Tiếng Việt*, Aug. 25, 2020; Tony Bùi, “Người Việt diễn hành bằng xe ủng hộ TT Trump và Cảnh Sát Rally to Support Trump & Police,” *Việt-Mỹ Newspaper*, Oct. 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Tina Hà Giang, “Ủng Hộ Black Lives Matter, hai người Mỹ gốc Việt bị gọi là ‘cộng sản’ và khủng bố tinh thần,” *BBC News Tiếng Việt*, July 11, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Tim Hains, “President Trump: ‘The Biden Family is Selling Out Our Country Directly to the Chinese Military,’” *RealClearPolitics*, Sep 10, 2020; Evie Fordham, “US lost jobs because Biden loves ‘made in China’: Navarro,” *Fox Business*, Sep. 6, 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Golding, “Hunter Biden’s deals ‘served’ China and its military, new documentary claims,” *Fox News*, Sep. 4, 2020.

and freedom, fighting against the Chinese communists through tough trade policies, and protecting the American society from radicalism and left-wing saboteurs.<sup>16</sup>

While these notions are undoubtedly enabled by the Trump campaign and contemporary conservative voices, the idea that one must adamantly oppose a political enemy who would “betray” or “sell” the nation to forces of international communism is not particularly novel in Vietnamese Americans political discourse. Contemporary Vietnamese American support for the Trump Presidency, at its crux, is a reflection of the historical embeddedness of anticommunism within the community. Indeed, for anyone who had long observed the community’s politics, the aggressiveness displayed, and the rhetoric deployed against Biden supporters mirrors countless political episodes across Vietnamese American history. Similar demonizing language and confrontation, for example, had occurred in 1999 when an angry crowd of some 15,000 Vietnamese Americans protested Hi-Tek, an electronics and video rental store, after the owner, Trường Văn Trần, displayed the Vietnamese communist flag and a portrait of Ho Chi Minh on his storefront.<sup>17</sup> Tony Lam, then sitting on the Westminster City Council as the first Vietnamese to be elected to American political office, had refused to participate in the protests. His businesses were picketed, effigies of him were burned, and he was labeled a “communist sympathizer.”<sup>18</sup> Intense as the Hi-Tek episode was, it was relatively more moderate than what had transpired during the 1980s when journalists were assassinated for publishing contents contrary to the political leanings of the community. These journalists were, too, deemed “traitors,” “communist sympathizers,” “dogs,” and other sub-human categorization that justified physical and political “extermination.”<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that the contemporary rhetoric deployed against Biden-supporters stem from an anticommunism that is entrenched within the Vietnamese American community. However, how that anticommunism has become so entrenched and why it continues to shape the contemporary moment is poorly answered in the existing scholarship. For one, it would be erroneous, as much of the literature has done, to understand such anticommunist fervency and “hatred” as a reflection of the loss and pain that the Vietnamese, as refugees, had endured. The issue here is not that the existing literature has not attended to the anticommunist politics of Vietnamese Americans. Rather it is how the literature has conceptualized and periodized the phenomenon. What one finds in these episodes of anticommunist engagement is not mere “mourning” or

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<sup>16</sup> Glorification of Trump and disinformation against the Biden Campaign targeting Vietnamese Americans are regularly disseminated through questionable online sources and social media forums. Amongst these, popularly consumed Vietnamese-language Youtube Channels like “Little Saigon News,” “Saigon News,” “Thờ Sứ Hoa Kỳ,” “HTD News,” and “Tin Tức 24H Online.” The Youtube Channel and Facebook site under the name “Viet Trump TV” also produce these messages. The conservative *Việt-Mỹ Magazine* repeats some of these claims (e.g., Lan Vy, Diễn tiến về vụ bê bối liên quan đến gia đình ông Joe Biden, *Việt-Mỹ Magazine*, Oct. 2020; Lan Vy, “Mối quan hệ mờ ám của con trai ông Joe Biden với Trung Cộng,” *Việt-Mỹ Magazine*, Oct. 2020). Trump campaign messages are also passed through the Facebook and Youtube Channel for “Viet Trump TV.” Similar content is presented on the Vietnamese editions of “The Epoch Times” and “New Tang Dynasty Television,” mouthpieces of the Falun Gong. On Falun Gong propaganda, see Kevin Roose, “How The Epoch Times Created a Giant Influence Machine,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 24, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Ressler, “The Man who Brought Back Ho Chi Minh,” *Time*, Mar. 8, 1999; Nam Q Ha, “Business and Politics in Little Saigon, California,” *Special Collections and Archives: The UC Irvine Libraries*, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Rene Sanchez, “Days of Rage in Little Saigon,” *The Washington Post*, Mar. 5, 1999;

<sup>19</sup> Y Thien Nguyen, “(Re)making the South Vietnamese Past in America,” *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 21(1):2018, 65-103.

commemoration of a painful, refugee past. It is, rather, the active reutilization of terminologies, symbols, and narratives that derives not from the refugee or the Vietnamese American experience per se, but rather in the national formation and state-building experience of South Vietnam. In this sense, the demonizing language we see in contemporary episodes is only but the most recent manifestation of an ideological form that had been “consolidated” long before any Vietnamese entered the United States as refugees.

For another, Vietnamese American politics cannot be seen as simply tied to the contemporary issues dominating the mainstream American political landscape. Just as how the contemporary Vietnamese American demonizing of the Biden-Harris ticket is not merely a reflection of rhetoric propagated by American conservative voices or the Trump Campaign, the anticommunism of the Vietnamese American community is propelled by a logic that is both internal to the community and rooted in a much deeper history. On the one hand, that logic speaks to the Vietnamese sense of self, identity, and understanding of community. The anticommunism in question have historically provided answers about Vietnamese nationhood and citizenship and articulated values, beliefs, and ideals about what a Vietnamese “imagined community” should be and what that that “community” should represent. On the other hand, anticommunism is a form of Vietnamese “nationalism” that, in the contemporary context, has melded political loyalty to an anticommunist Vietnamese nation to that of an anticommunist American one. Here, Vietnamese American’s interpretation of the broader American political landscape is greatly shaped by how the community has historically interpreted its own history and its relationship to South Vietnam.

Thus, in the contemporary moment, although we find parallels between the rhetoric of American conservatives and Vietnamese American anticommunists in their portrayal of Biden and Trump, there are divergences in what ultimately informs these discourses. For Vietnamese Americans, the anticommunist rhetoric they deploy is rooted in the discourse of a state that has ceased to exist some 45 years ago last April. The Vietnamese American anticommunist depiction of Biden as a national traitor who would “sell” the United States to China is akin to the narrative once deployed during the Vietnamese Republican era (1955-1975) deriding Vietnamese communists in Hà Nội as “traitors” *Việt gian* who “deceived” *lừa bịp* the masses to “sell the nation” *bán nước* to Soviet and Chinese communism. Such a depiction had been central to how the South Vietnamese state justified its refusal to sign or recognize the 1954 Geneva Accords—a document that, as narrated in Republican anticommunist discourse, was responsible for the division of Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel and, consequently, the war that would result in millions of Vietnamese deaths. This narrative generated caricatures of communists as infiltrators, liars, and deceivers against whom the Vietnamese people must ever be vigilant and wary. As evident in the oft-repeated words of the former South Vietnamese President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, “Đừng nghe những gì Cộng Sản nói mà hãy nhìn những gì cộng sản làm,” [Listen not to what the communists say, but see what the communists do]. Such notions of “resoluteness against communism” *dứt khoát với cộng sản* had traveled with Vietnamese refugees following the Fall of Saigon and into their communities abroad.<sup>20</sup> It had inspired contemporary Vietnamese

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<sup>20</sup> The idea of “resoluteness” against communism emerged, for example, in Vietnamese American opposition to Bill AB-22 proposed in 2017, which would allow Communist Party members to hold state jobs (“Cư dân Little Saigon ‘dứt khoát không mở đường cho cộng sản,’” *Người Việt*, May 11, 2017; Huy Lam, “Thượng Nghị Sĩ Janet Nguyễn: Cộng Sản Không Có Chỗ Đứng ở California,” *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Cộng Đồng Hải Ngoại*, May 19, 2017; Vi Anh, “Chống Dự Luật AB 22,” *Việt Báo*, May 19, 2017); AB-22, ultimately, was dropped by Rob

American protests against visits by representatives of the Vietnamese communist government, the establishment of “No-Communist Zones,” and violence against “communist sympathizers.”<sup>21</sup> In the present moment, anticommunist voices in Vietnamese America equate the Democratic platform with the communist “slogans” *chiêu bài* once used to deceive and then betray the Vietnamese people.<sup>22</sup>

The anticommunist discourse, and the historical production of that discourse, matters. The remaking of the South Vietnamese past and how that past concretely shapes and informs the Vietnamese American present is the subject of this dissertation. To achieve this task, the dissertation diverges from contemporary approaches that view Vietnamese American anticommunism as a form of “hatred” derived from the refugee experience and the loss of nation, or as a reflection of American imperialism, or imitation of American foreign policy. Rather, the dissertation locates Vietnamese American anticommunism in the indigenous attempt to create and sustain an independent, anticommunist Vietnamese nation during the Cold War. Exploration of this history of intense state-building and national formation directs attention to efforts of the Republican state craft a responsible, ideologically versed, anticommunist citizenry that would enthusiastically contribute to the development and defense of the nation. In the context of the unfolding civil war in South Vietnam, Republican state-builders sought to create a citizenry that was singularly devoted to the anticommunist cause, ever-ready and willing to fight against the forces of communism and, if need be, sacrifice himself or herself to prevent the fall of the nation into communist hands. As such, citizens were to “absorb” *thấm nhuần* the ideological messages of the Republican state and deploy anticommunism as a “spiritual weapon” to safeguard oneself and one’s compatriots from the deceptive propaganda of the communist enemy.

The dissertation, thus, relocates the creation of the Vietnamese “anticommunist subject” away from American immigration policy and the refugee passage, and towards the history of “ideological work” conducted under the Republican state. The dissertation examines how “Republican anticommunism” became a hegemonic, prevalent, and “consolidated” political culture in South Vietnam. It points to the array of anticommunist mass mobilization campaigns, participatory activities, and state-sponsored cultural production by which civilians became integrated into the “nationalizing” project. While these programs provided anticommunist political culture, rigid anticommunist laws, censorship, surveillance, and state coercion established the ideological boundary that “rules out” any and all things communist.

Rather than an ideology exclusive to the Republican state, the dissertation demonstrates how Republican anticommunism survived despite the collapse of the regime that gave birth to it. The dissertation explores the diverse ways through which both state and non-state actors deployed and redeployed anticommunist narratives, terminologies, concepts across the societal upheavals, regime changes, and warfare that characterized Republican history. The persistence of Republican anticommunism as a collective discourse is explained, on the one hand, by continual

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Bonta who proposed the bill (Guy Marzorati, “Oakland Assemblyman Drops Bill to Allow Communists in State Government,” *KQED*, May 18, 2017).

<sup>21</sup> On no-communist zones, see David Haldane, “The Region; Garden Grove OKs Measure Opposing Visits by Vietnamese Communists,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> See interview with a former South Vietnamese Air Force officer who founded an initiative to fly a giant “Vietnamese Americans Vote Trump” banner in Little Saigon who argues that the Democrats were purposefully bringing socialism to the United States: “Phi công Lê Hùng và kế hoạch bay ủng hộ Tổng Thống Trump,” *PhốBolsaTV*, Sep. 26, 2020 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLDTjKsnNd4>>.

reinforcement of the ideology by different Republican regimes, and, on the other hand, the changeability of constitutive narratives and their continued relevance to diverse South Vietnamese actors at radically different moments in time. As this dissertation will demonstrate, narratives developed at one point in time were reinterpreted and extended to speak to developments far removed from events for which they were intended.

The adaptability of these narratives helps explain how Republican anticommunism reconstituted in refugee communities in the United States. Former political and military elites redeployed Republican anticommunism as a source of political legitimacy and an instrument for community mobilization. By retooling the familiar narratives, terminologies, and symbols within the Republican anticommunist repertoire to speak to refugee and exilic concerns, these elites, on the one hand, reestablished ideological leadership over the community and, on the other hand, reconstituted Republican anticommunism as the defining characteristic of the Vietnamese American community. As this dissertation argues, it is impossible to understand contemporary Vietnamese America and the entrenched anticommunist politics of the community without understanding how anticommunism as a discourse historically emerged and developed, its relationship to state power and national formation, and its role in shaping and defining the Vietnamese modern experience.

It is difficult to not note the odd (if troubling) mixture of the South Vietnamese past and the Trumpian present constituting contemporary Vietnamese American anticommunism. No better example of such temporally contradictory concoction than in those events of early October. As the “caravan” of Vietnamese American Trump supporters made its way across the country, “meet-and-greet” rallies were held at key Vietnamese American centers along the way. At these rallies were consistent chants that rang: “Who defeated the Chinese Communists?” “Who defeated socialism?”—“Donald Trump!” It is as if the political mantle once bequeathed upon revered Vietnamese anticommunist leaders has been transferred to an orange-tanned, white man with blonde hair. Indeed, these rallies simultaneously entailed the flag waving and sloganeering of a typical Trump rally, as well as activities that traditionally characterizes a Vietnamese American communal gathering: the singing of the South Vietnamese national anthem, salute to the South Vietnamese flag, and continuous karaoke of popular South Vietnamese songs. The flurries of flags mixed American, South Vietnamese, and Trump symbols into a sea of red and yellow, blue and white upon which radically divergent histories awkwardly converged. Beneath a raised “golden yellow” flag at Eden Center on a gloomy Monday morning, participants in MAGA hats and carrying “Trump-Pence” signs, with hands to their hearts, sang the familiar refrain:

“Công Dân ơi! Mau hiến thân dưới cờ [O citizens! Hurry, offer yourself below the flag]  
 Công Dân ơi! Mau làm cho cõi bờ [O citizens! Hurry, make our lands and shores]  
 Thoát con tàn phá về vang nòi giống [Survive the destruction, glorify our ancestry]  
 Xứng danh nghìn năm là giống Lạc Hồng [Deserving of a thousand years as descendants of Lạc Hồng]”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> This is the refrain of the South Vietnamese national anthem: *Tiếng Gọi Công Dân* [The Call of Citizens]. The depicted scene is covered and published by the Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: “Tuần hành ủng hộ TT Trump trong khu trung tâm Thương Mại Eden,” *Saigon Broadcasting Television Network: Phóng Sự Cộng Đồng*, Oct. 12, 2020



Politics in Vietnamese America surrounding the 2020 elections, undoubtedly, reflects the complex history of anticommunism within the community—an anticommunism that goes beyond merely political attitudes or opinions, but an entire array of historically-rooted discourses, performances, and symbolization that brings together themes of nationhood, citizenship, cultural identification, as well as a strong dose of conservatism, political toxicity, and ideological policing. However, despite the centrality of anticommunism in Vietnamese American politics and history, it is surprising that systematic studies of the phenomenon are rare in the sociological and historical literature. Asian Americans are the fastest growing electoral bloc within the United States and how they vote will be a determining factor on future elections. As the fourth largest group within Asian America, Vietnamese American engagement with anticommunism will be progressively important in the years to come.

For one, anticommunism significantly factors into how many Vietnamese Americans vote and which political party they support. Vietnamese Americans, particularly the older generation, have long been known to lean towards the Republican Party. Amongst Asian Americans, Vietnamese Americans are the least likely to identify as Democrat and more likely to support the Republican Party. Scholars have historically equated Vietnamese American support of Republicans to that of the Cubans within the Latino community, making them “distinctive” amongst immigrants of Asian origin.<sup>24</sup> Recent polling suggests similar trends when it comes to the Trump Presidency. While the Republican Party saw a marked decline in both Vietnamese and Asian American support in 2016 from previous elections, the 32% of Vietnamese Americans that voted for Trump still far surpassed the 18% in the general Asian American electorate. In 2018, Vietnamese Americans are more likely to identify as Republican (42%) than that of the general Asian American electorate (28%).<sup>25</sup> An AAPI poll, in fact, shows a whopping 64% of Vietnamese Americans approve of Trump’s job performance two years into his Presidency while three in five of the Asian American electorate *disapproved* of Trump’s job as President.<sup>26</sup>

To explain this longstanding Republican support, scholars have consistently noted the role anticommunism plays in the Vietnamese American community.<sup>27</sup> Vietnamese Americans are widely understood as a community of refugees who were forced to flee from their homeland following the fall of Saigon in 1975. As those “boat people” who had once traversed the dangerous high seas to escape the victorious communist regime, Vietnamese Americans “understandably” held “indelible anti-communist hatred,”<sup>28</sup> “intense antipathy to

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<sup>24</sup> Zoltan Hajnal and Taeku Lee, *Why Americans Don't Join the Party*, (Princeton University Press, 2011), 157-158, 197.

<sup>25</sup> Abby Budiman, “Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial or ethnic group in the US electorate,” *Pew Research Center*, May 7, 2020. <<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/05/07/asian-americans-are-the-fastest-growing-racial-or-ethnic-group-in-the-u-s-electorate/>>

<sup>26</sup> AAPI, “2018 Asian American Voter Survey,” 5.

<sup>27</sup> My Thuan Tran and Christian Berthelsen, “Vietnamese voters go left; Anticommunism in OC is tempered by a focus on domestic issues. Democratic registration increases,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 29, 2008.

<sup>28</sup> C.N. Le, “Better Dead Than Red: Anti-communist Politics among Vietnamese Americans,” in *Anti-communist Minorities in the U.S.: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees*, ed. Ieva Zake (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 193.

Communism,”<sup>29</sup> or “sentiments of animosity towards the [Socialist Republic of Vietnam],”<sup>30</sup> apparently stemming from decades of war, deprivation, pain, and loss at the hands of the communists. For many who study the community, these experiences of violence and dislocation lay at the center of explaining Vietnamese American anticommunism and the longstanding support for the Republican Party and conservative causes. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, political scientist Fred Smoller of Chapman University, for example, argued that first generation Vietnamese Americans “came out in force as anti-communists, and they strongly believe that the Republican is more understanding of their stance.” That “stance” derives from the fact that these refugees “can never forget the loss of their country” and the treacherous “escape” from communist rule that many had endured following the fall of Saigon.<sup>31</sup> Similar Linda Vo notes, “The elders may be openly supporting Trump and the Republicans because they feel an affinity for the party they view as fighting against the government that took over their homeland.”<sup>32</sup> Past experiences surrounding the refugee departure and loss of homeland, thus, is the cornerstone of how the entrenched anticommunism of Vietnamese America, and, resultantly, its support for the Republican Party, is explained by journalists and academics alike. As one scholar makes explicit, the post-war anticommunist discourse publicly articulated in the community reflects “the personal memories of a majority of Việt Kiều.”<sup>33</sup>

This anticommunist “refugeeism” has historically defined the very essence of identity and belonging in the Vietnamese American community.<sup>34</sup> Children grow up with tales from their parents about “their own postwar escapes from the place of their birth.”<sup>35</sup> Often these tales are replete with references to harrowing trials and tribulations that the older generation had to endure to reach this American “Land of the Free.” Such arduous experiences include stories of reeducation camps, piracy and rape in the South China Seas, death and starvation on rickety ships, and loss of family and friends and regret for those left behind.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, precisely such a narrative is captured in the 2007 Vietnamese American film *Journey From the Fall* which

<sup>29</sup> James Ciment, “Vietnamese American Politics and Political Empowerment,” in Allan Austin and Huping Ling (eds.), *Asian American History and Culture: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge: 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde, *Transnationalizing Viet Nam: Community, Cultural, and Politics in the Diaspora*, (Temple University Press, 2012), 10.

<sup>31</sup> Anh Do, “In Little Saigon, strong support for Trump’s war on illegal immigration collides with other realities,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep. 27, 2018.

<sup>32</sup> Anh Do, “Trump widens a generation gap in Vietnamese community: Older hard-liners vs. liberal youths.” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 19, 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Louis-Jacques Dorais, “Politics, Kinship, and Ancestors: Some Diasporic Dimensions of the Vietnamese Experience in North America,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 5:2(2010), 91-132.

<sup>34</sup> For definition of “refugeeism,” see James A. Morrissey, “Migration, Resettlement, and Refugeeism: Issues in Medical Anthropology,” *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, 15:1 (1983), 3+11-14. Asian American Studies, see Mitchell Paul Ogden, “Refugee Utopias: (Re)Theorizing Refugeeism Through Cultural Production of the Hmong Diaspora, (Diss., University of Minnesota, 2008); Phuong Tran Nguyen, “The People of the Fall: Refugee Nationalism in Little Saigon, 1975-2005” (Diss., University of Southern California, 2009);

<sup>35</sup> Anh Do, “Trump widens a generation gap in Vietnamese community: Older hard-liners vs. liberal youths.” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 19, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Contemporary rendition of these themes in the scholarship are often through works utilizing Vietnamese American oral histories and life stories. A recent example is in Nghia M. Vo’s *The Vietnamese Boat People, 1954 and 1975-1992* which sought to “compile stories of these sea and land voyages, and to retrace the dangerous paths these modern voyagers took to reach the lands of freedom” (McFarland&Company, Inc., 2006), 4. Emphasis on “trauma,” loss, and resilience in the narratives of Vietnamese refugees are also found in Nathalie Huynh Chau Nguyen, *Memory is Another Country: Women of the Diaspora*, (Praeger, 2009).

followed the escape and rescue of Vietnamese refugees on the fictional fishing boat of Đại Nghĩa. In the film, as the mother and her child reach American shores, the father languishes in a reeducation camp, only to die trying to, too, escape communism. Themes of freedom, escape, communist repression and sacrifice expressed in the film reflect how many Vietnamese Americans understand and narrate the reasons for—as one Vietnamese film reviewer puts it—“why are we here? Why were we forced to leave our homeland and chose some strange, faraway land to start our lives anew?”<sup>37</sup>

At least until the last decade of the Cold War, the strong stance in GOP foreign policy towards communist countries had allowed the Party to acquire support from not only Vietnamese Americans, but also the “anticommunist refugees” from China, Korea, and other Southeast Asian countries.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, during the 1990’s, Asian Americans were the only racial group more conservative than whites.<sup>39</sup> While the Asian American vote has grown increasingly progressive since the turn of the millennium, Vietnamese Americans remain a strong political base for the Republican Party.<sup>40</sup> The crux of Vietnamese American anticommunism and its affinity with white conservative causes provides a platform that joins the interests of these two groups, even if these coalitions reflect “wary, short-term pragmatism.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as demonstrated in the contemporary support for Trump, the attacks that the President has deployed against China are resoundingly welcomed amongst many within the Vietnamese American community. The reasons why Vietnamese Americans oppose China, however, are not necessarily the same as those of the President.

For another, anticommunism is a source of polarization between older and younger generation Vietnamese Americans, and how that conflict is resolved can potentially shape the trajectory of Vietnamese American politics for the years to come. While a large portion of anticommunist activism is populated by the older generation, in recent years, a progressive movement led by younger Vietnamese Americans have emerged in political juxtaposition to their parents and elders. This younger generation not only tends to lean Democratic, they have also organized campaigns in opposition to the Trump administration’s anti-immigration policies, marched in support of Black Lives Matters, and pushed for protection of tenants and workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Seemingly, this younger generation does not bear the same

<sup>37</sup> Thanh Nguyễn, “Sáu Năm Cho Một Cuốn Phim Vượt Sống – Journey from the Fall (Kỳ 2)” [Six Years for a Film Journey from the Fall (Series 2)], *Người Việt* [Vietnamese People], March 20, 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070328173936/http://www.nguoi-viet.com/absolutenm/anviewer.asp?a=57305&z=124> (accessed January 10, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> Bruce Cain, D. Roderick Kiewiet, Carole Uhlaner, “The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 35:2(1991), 390-422.

<sup>39</sup> Marco Morini, “Asian Americans in Politics” in *Asian American Culture: From Anime to Tiger Moms* (Greenwood, 2016), 567-570.

<sup>40</sup> Karthick Mamakrishnan, “How Asian Americans Became Democrats,” *The American Prospect*, Summer 2016; Ryan General, “Why More Vietnamese Americans are Voting for Trump,” *NextShark*, Oct. 2020; Anna Vu, “Why Some Vietnamese Americans support Donald Trump,” *The Conversation*, Aug. 19, 2020; Kate Lý Jonston, “Vietnamese-Americans more likely to vote for Trump, survey says. How are their liberal kids coping?” *USC Annenberg Media*, Sep. 21, 2020; Baoky Vu, “The Asian American voters who could help Trump win a second term,” *CNN-Opinion*, Aug. 6, 2020.; Sen Nguyen, “US election: Vietnamese-American prefer Trump to Biden—and the president has fans in Vietnam too,” *South China Morning Post*, Oct. 3, 2020; Kimmy Van, “Who are the Asian Americans still voting for Trump in spite of his ‘China virus’ rhetoric,” *NBC News*, Oct. 27, 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Christian Collett, “The Viability of ‘Going it Alone’: Vietnamese in America and the Coalition Experience of a Transnational Community,” *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 1:2(2008), 279-311.

anticommunist “hatred” as those Vietnamese Americans who came before. The political rigidity of the older generation has, in fact, become a point of communal conflict, seen as an impediment for those championing progressive causes.<sup>42</sup>

However, the disjuncture between the first generation Vietnamese Americans and their children or grandchildren is not simply a matter of generational misunderstanding or a difference of experiences between those who had endured as refugees and those who had grown up in a “multicultural” society.<sup>43</sup> Rather, what the younger generation confronts is an entrenched, hegemonic ideology that has governed not only the Vietnamese communities in the United States, but also the society from which the older generation derive—that of South Vietnam. Such an ideology is, on the one hand, historically reinforced through embedded workings of power, institutions, and narratives that cannot be so easily dispelled.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, this ideology had informed not only Vietnamese American politics, but also its culture, identity, and the very definition of belonging within the community.

An understanding the contemporary political divisions within the Vietnamese American community over the issue of anticommunism requires that the scholarship and progressive activists reexamine how that anticommunism emerged and became so hegemonic in the first place. To do so, one cannot rely on a conceptualization of Vietnamese American anticommunism as something that stems from past experiences of hardship and tribulations, pain and losses “at the hands of communist officials,”<sup>45</sup> nor is it sufficient to understand this ideology as a product of American imperialism and Cold War US immigration policies. The former obscures how anticommunism has been historically constructed and its historical relationship to institutions of power and authority in South Vietnam and Vietnamese America. The latter simplifies

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<sup>42</sup> Progressive activism within the community had been led by groups such as Viet Unity, Viet Rise, and PIVOT (The Progressive Vietnamese American Organization), which had mobilized cross-racially and intergenerationally around opposition to the deportation of Vietnamese refugees under the President’s anti-migration policies, support of Black Lives Matter, and a host of other issues (Tâm An, “Biểu tình ‘Bảo vệ người Việt tị nạn’ tại Little Saigon,” *Người Việt*, Dec. 16, 2018; “Biểu tình tại Little Saigon chống trục xuất người Việt tị nạn,” *VOA Tiếng Việt*, Dec. 17, 2018; Cát Linh, “Người biểu tình đòi công lý cho George Floyd chặn trục đường chính Little Saigon,” *Người Việt*, June 6, 2020; Trần Ngọc, “Tuần hành cho Phong Trào Black Lives Matter / Quyền sống của Người Da Đen ở East Campus vào Juneteenth / Ngày Chấm Dứt Chế Độ Nô Lệ 19 Tháng 6 ~ Black Lives Matter March on East Campus on Juneteenth,” *Việt Tide*, June 23, 2020; Anh Do, “Vietnamese Americans rally in Little Saigon against Trump administration’s push to deport thousands of war refugees,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 15, 2020; Brandon Pho, “Garden Grove Protest Displays Cross-Cultural and Racial Solidarity Years in the Making,” *Voice of OC*, June 5, 2020; Tracy La, “La: We were also told to ‘Go Back,’ It’s time for Vietnamese-American electeds to ‘Bring Human Rights Home,” *Voice of OC*, July 22, 2019; Ada Tseng, “O.C. Vietnamese American activists urge youth to speak up for their beliefs,” *Daily Pilot*, Oct. 18, 2019). A critical take on notions that anticommunism is an impediment to progressive politics, see Long S. Le, “Exploring the Function of the Anti-Communist Ideology and Identity in the Vietnamese American Diasporic Community,” *Journal of Southeast Asia American Education and Advancement*, 6:14(2011), 1-27.

<sup>43</sup> Anh Do, “Trump widens a generation gap in Vietnamese community: Older hard-liners vs. liberal youths,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 19, 2017; Anh Do, “Trump impeachment leaves one Orange County family divided along generational lines,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 18, 2019;

<sup>44</sup> In large part, the contemporary approach the issue of Trump and anticommunism in dialogue, seeking to “persuade their parents to reconsider” (ed. Kevin Kim, “US election: A generational divide over Trump among Vietnamese-Americans,” *BBC News*, Oct. 27, 2020).

<sup>45</sup> C.N. Le, “Better Dead Than Red: Anti-communist Politics among Vietnamese Americans,” in *Anti-communist Minorities in the U.S.: Political Activism of Ethnic Refugees*, ed. Ieva Zake (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 193.

anticommunism to little more than a Vietnamese “false consciousness” without legitimacy or substance beyond its relationship to American interventionism overseas. While US Cold War policies undoubtedly enabled the making of Vietnamese American anticommunism, it is not its source.

Situating this ideology within the longer history of South Vietnamese nationhood and state-formation, and how aspects of that “nationalizing” experience are transplanted into Vietnamese refugee communities in the United States relocates the contemporary “generational” struggle over anticommunism to the internal mechanics and structures of power/knowledge within the community itself. As later chapters will demonstrate, the battles over what a Vietnamese community should represent and what values it should stand for are not novel phenomena. These contests over symbols and meanings had been central to not only Vietnamese American history, but also the history of the Republic of Vietnam. The fight for younger Vietnamese Americans, thus, lies not in combating the opinions or beliefs of their elders per se, but the institutions of ideological power that have long monopolized how anticommunism and the community are defined.

For younger Vietnamese Americans, the contemporary moment requires a sober and lucid confronting of our anticommunist past. Vietnamese American belonging, after all, is a set of contradictions. Progressive alliances, particularly around issues of race and class, situate us within an Asian American movement to which we did not historically belong. Our attempt to fit our Vietnamese American “story” within the Civil Rights and Anti-War Movements of the 1960s and 70s come into contradiction with the community’s symbols of belonging—the flag, the anthem, the songs, the very name Little *Saigon* itself—all of which originated from politics and values that are seemingly juxtaposed to contemporary understanding of social justice and progressivism.<sup>46</sup> But our history points to alternatives for what South Vietnam and Vietnamese America could have been.

Few of us realize that anticommunism, at one point, had meant viewing the “underdevelopment” of South Vietnam as a point of solidarity the Vietnamese people shared with other peoples in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Albeit a solidarity opposed to communism and abetted, in part, by the United States, it was an ideal of internationalist, “Third World,” anti-colonialist affinity built on the promise of “self-determination” for newly independent nations. Anticommunism in South Vietnam, also, at one point meant opposition to white supremacy, or, in the words Ngô Đình Nhu, “white colonialism.” It meant resistance to foreign domination and influence over the domestic affairs of their nation—against the Soviet Union and China, as well as the United States and countries of the West. And anticommunism, both in South Vietnam and Vietnamese America, had also once meant the welcoming of refugees and migrants who fled authoritarian and war-ridden countries.

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<sup>46</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Refugee Memories and Asian American Critique,” *Positions* 20, no. 3 (2012): 926; on the challenges of building Pan-Asian ethnic solidarity between traditionally dominant Asian American groups (Chinese and Japanese Americans) and newly arrived Southeast Asian migrants, see Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Pan ethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Temple University Press, 1992).



The sign reads “We Declare Our Thankfulness to the Friends of the Migrants all over the World.”<sup>47</sup>

As Dr. King marched to Montgomery from Selma, on the other side of the world, anticommunism was being deployed by South Vietnamese citizens who, for 18 long months, rallied in the thousands almost daily to demand “social justice,” “social liberties,” “True Democracy and Freedom,” and the reinstating of civil rule. They too were met with, but undeterred by, police batons, water cannons, mass arrests, and imprisonments. Anticommunism, redefined and reappropriated from the South Vietnamese state, had been mobilized by South Vietnamese (not American) anti-war activists who called upon their government to cease hostilities and return to the task of “building the nation.” Such a movement had inspired the songs of South Vietnamese (and Vietnamese American) folk legend Trịnh Công Sơn who lamented the “legacy of Mother Vietnam,” seeing her “children” who had forgotten their “skin color,” riled by “resentment and hatred” *hận thù*, and destroying themselves and the country on the fields of battle.<sup>48</sup> This movement which opposed a “military solution” to the war was championed by not only the reverends of the Unified Buddhist Church, but also by the activist Catholic priest Hoàng Quỳnh, journalists and popular news forums as diverse as *Tự Do*, *Chính Luận Chánh Đạo* (a main Buddhist news organ) and *Xây Dựng* (main Catholic news organ), the religious sects Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, as well as civil leaders from a sundry of political stripes.

If such history is unrecalled or unmentioned in contemporary Vietnamese American renarration of the past, it is because those conferred with authority to tell our story had left such a history out. Collective memory is, after all, the selective and politicized remembering of the past. In the orthodox retelling, this period of South Vietnamese social activism and resistance is marred with images of “chaos,” “communist infiltration,” and social disruption, ultimately

<sup>47</sup> “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận* rally on July 20, 1964 in Saigon. *Source*: Youtube video “Ngày Quốc Hận 20-7-1964 Sài Gòn,” uploaded Sep. 7, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Here I reference his 1965 song “Gia Tài của Mẹ.” Mourned and eulogized for his death in Vietnam (“Vietnam mourns its ‘Dylan,’” *BBC News*, April 4, 2001), Trịnh Công Sơn and his songs are similarly commemorated by his fan in Vietnamese America (Lý Khánh Hồng, “Nhân độc bi kịch Trịnh Công Sơn nhớ lại một lớp người,” *Viễn Đông Daily News*, Apr. 11, 2020; Vann Phan, “Nhớ nhau đành tìm trong tiếng hát với đêm nhạc ‘Sài Gòn Màu Kỷ Niệm,’” *Việt Tide*, Sep. 9, 2019).

leading to the loss of South Vietnam. In such a narration, those who had championed progressive change in the name of anticommunism and South Vietnamese nationalism similarly had their political loyalties questioned and demonized as “communist sympathizers” and “traitors.” The castigation of this more progressive utilization of the anticommunist discourse favors the post-1975 reconstitution of legitimacy for former military and political elites who had once sought to answer the communist threat with increased military technology, expanded war, and the repression of civil dissent. Critical examination of this history can provide alternative imaginations to what anticommunism, South Vietnam, and Vietnamese America could have been.



Source: Người Việt Daily News.<sup>49</sup>



Source: PhởBolsaTV<sup>50</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Đăng Giao, “Giới trẻ gốc Việt và căng thagrnr gia đình vì biểu tình ủng hộ ông Floyd,” *Người Việt Daily News*, July 8, 2020.

<sup>50</sup> “Xuất Hiện Cờ Vàng 3 sọc đỏ tại cuộc biểu tình #BLM ở Westminster,” *PhởBolsaTV*, June 6, 2020.

As a collective discourse, anticommunism is adaptive and everchanging—an incomplete entity that is formed and reformed through historical human use and deployment. As we see with the contemporary deployment of the South Vietnamese flag amongst Vietnamese American Biden-supporters or activists in support of Black Lives Matter, the first steps had already been taken to reappropriate the symbols of anticommunism in Vietnamese America and retool them for progressive causes. Such redeployment of symbols, however, will inevitably come into confrontation with the vested powers in the community and ideological institutions that had long monopolized these symbols’ meaning and use. The political future of the community will be shaped by the unfolding struggle over these symbols, their meanings, and the anticommunist past from which they derive. What matters is who the future leaders of the Vietnamese American community will be and what these leaders ultimately choose to do with a shared anticommunist discourse.

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The following sections in this introductory chapter will review the existing historical and sociological literature related to Vietnamese Americans, anticommunism, and the Vietnam War. I begin with a discussion of how Vietnamese Americans are historically and represented within the sociological literature on immigration and refugees. Most pertinently, the introduction critically examines how the literature conceive of Vietnamese American anticommunism, and argues that even the most recent efforts to examine “Vietnamese subjectivity,” memories, and politics fail to adequately understand the scope and depth of anticommunism in Vietnamese American politics. I argue that, to do so, the scholarship must redirect its attention to the historical roots of anticommunism during the national formation process that had transpired South Vietnam. I then move on to review the literature on the Vietnam War and the recent “New Vietnam War studies” that advocates for the historical examination of South Vietnamese “agency,” politics, and society as often ignored in orthodox historiography of the war. Despite an appreciated development in the historiography of the Vietnam War, the recent scholarship fails to examine the legacy of this war, particularly within the Vietnamese refugee communities abroad. I argue for a conjoining of these two literatures to probe questions and provide answers related to the most recent developments within each field.

To build a comprehensive understanding of anticommunism that connects both Vietnamese America and South Vietnam, I turn to the broader scholarship on nationalism and nation-state formation. I develop a concept of “Republican anticommunism,” defined as a hegemonic and dynamic nationalist ideology that had been shaped and reshaped by South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American actors across history. It is a sociopolitical construct that was produced and promulgated by the Republican state, proliferated and became “consolidated” through efforts by both state and non-state actors, existed as the predominant form of politics and framework of interpretation for actors in South Vietnam, and was eventually transported along with the Vietnamese refugees to construct their communities abroad.

To empirically parse out and examine the history of Republican anticommunism, I utilize an unstudied ideological education program called the Political Study Program (PSP) to examine how citizens are made in South Vietnam. This program stands as a quintessential case for understanding the citizen-formation process due its consistent role in the dissemination of anticommunist texts and its integrative function in mass mobilizing activities during the



Republican Era. The content of what is taught and disseminated through the PSP provides the empirical basis for this dissertation to map out the core narratives and concepts that constitute Republican anticommunism as a discourse. As the most evident product stemming from the South Vietnamese “nationalizing” experience to be transported to refugee communities following the Vietnam War, this Republican anticommunist discourse is deeply embedded in contemporary Vietnamese American cultural activities and remembrance. The introduction concludes with a summary of chapters in this dissertation.

### *Vietnamese Americans in the Immigration Literature*

Following the collapse of Saigon government in 1975, the exodus of South Vietnamese refugees began en masse. In general, three distinct waves of migration can be identified. The first wave, which occurred in the period leading up to and immediately following the Fall of Saigon, comprised primarily of politicians, professionals, state agents, military officers, and those who had close ties to the Republican government or American enterprises in Vietnam. This largely urbanite cohort of 125,000 was soon followed by consecutive waves of “boat people,” sparking a “crisis” as nations sought to manage the outflow of Indochinese refugees who fled the region amidst the outbreak of the Third Indochina War, economic deterioration, and political persecution. From 1978 to 1997, the number of Vietnamese boat people numbered in the excess of 400,000, many of whom had embarked on their journey on vessels poorly designed for lengthy travel at seas, had faced violence and piracy, were detained for significant periods in refugee camps, and only allowed into Western nations after a significant vetting process. More ethnically, politically, and economically diverse than the previous wave, “the boat people were less equipped for life in the United States...less well educated and had a more rural background than the refugees who arrived in 1975.” The last wave of refugees came through the Orderly Departure Program (later called the Humanitarian Operation Program), funneling some 500,000 former political prisoners, “reeducation” camp detainees, and Amerasians into the United States.<sup>51</sup>

The scholarship on Vietnamese Americans began as soon as refugees began arriving in the United States. Early sociological studies almost exclusively focused on Vietnamese adjustment to American life. Questions guiding researchers, in large part, responded to the challenges posed by the unprecedented number of asylees seeking entry into the United States amidst one of the worst economic downturns in US history. In large part, social scientists from the period treated Vietnamese migration as a human resource problem, consisting of how to, and whether these refugees could, effectively integrate into the American economic and cultural systems. Guided by the classic assimilation paradigm, researchers probed Vietnamese integration into the US labor market, their reliance on social assistance, Vietnamese children’s grade point average, their acquisition of the English language, and the socioeconomic aspirations and “success” of Vietnamese refugees.<sup>52</sup> Early research, in general, presented an optimistic view of

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<sup>51</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World’s Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

<sup>52</sup> Barry Stein, “Occupational Adjustment of Refugees: the Vietnamese in the United States,” *International Migration Review*, 13(1):1979, 25-45; David Haines, Dorothy Rutherford, and Patrick Thomas, “The case for exploratory Fieldwork: Understanding the Adjustment of Vietnamese Refugees in the Washington Area,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 52(2):1981, 94-102; Rita J. Simon, “Refugee families’ adjustment and aspirations: A comparison of Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese immigrants,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 6(4):1983, 492-504; Gail P.

Vietnamese integration, placing emphasis on the role of the refugee family, “Asian” culture, and ethnic solidarity in mitigating the social, cultural, and economic challenges that came with refugee adjustment.<sup>53</sup>

Beginning the 1990’s, more critically minded scholars began shifting away from the assimilation paradigm to begin questioning the representation of Vietnamese Americans within not only the sociological literature, but also in American popular media at large. This came in tandem with broader discussions regarding the implicit biases embedded in cultural assimilation theory and its utility for understanding the experiences and lives of migrant groups.<sup>54</sup> With regards to Vietnamese Americans, critiques focused on how the story of Vietnamese assimilability and success melded into the myth of the “model minority.”<sup>55</sup> As scholars argue, Vietnamese Americans are presented as just the newest addition of high achieving, assimilated Asian migrants who were able to reach “American dream” through “hard work and perseverance, rather than political confrontation and agitation.”<sup>56</sup> Scholars argue that despite high labor force participation, Vietnamese Americans subsist on wages near poverty, continued to rely on welfare programs, and had to turn to the informal economy to make ends meet. Rather than a story of immigrant success and achievement, Gold and Kibria view the Vietnamese American experience as one of “blocked mobility,” by which migrants had to resort to “strategies of survival, including the pooling of family and community resources, reliance on public assistance,

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Kelly, “Coping with America: Refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in the 1970s and 1980s,” *The Annals of the American Academy of the Political and Social Science*, 487: 1986, 138-149; David W. Haines (ed.), *Refugees as Immigrants: Cambodians, Laotians, and Vietnamese in America*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 1989). These sociological dimensions emphasized in the earlier scholarship continues in many recent scholarship that opt to view Vietnamese Americans through somewhat more refined perspectives on assimilation and adaptation: James Freeman, *Changing Identities: Vietnamese Americans, 1975-1995*, (Allyn and Bacon, 1995); Thuy B. Pham and Richard J. Harris, “Acculturation strategies among Vietnamese-Americans,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25: 2001, 279-300; Ruben Rumbaut, “A Legacy of War: Refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia,” in Silvia Pedraza and Ruben Rumbaut, *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in America*, (Wadsworth, 1996), 315-333; Rebecca Y. Kim, “Ethnic Differences in Academic Achievement between Vietnamese and Cambodian Children: Cultural and Structural Explanations,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 43(2): 2002, 213-235; Arthur Sakamoto and Hyeyoung Woo, “The Socioeconomic Attainments of Second-Generation Cambodian, Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese Americans,” *Sociological Inquiry*, 77(1):2007, 44-75; Monica M. Trieu, “The Role of Premigration Status in the Acculturation of Chinese-Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans,” *Sociological Inquiry*, 83(3):2013, 392-420.

<sup>53</sup> Emphasis on “Asian” cultural and heritage in explaining Vietnamese American “successful” adaption is most evident in the classic works of Nathan Caplan, John K. Whitmore, and Marcella H. Choy, *The Boat People and Achievement in America: A Study of Family Life, Hard Work, and Cultural Values*, (University of Michigan Press, 1989), Min Zhou and Carl L. Bankston III, *Growing Up American: How Vietnamese Children Adapt to Life in the United States*, (Russell Sage, 1998), and Paul James Rutledge, *The Vietnamese Experience in America*, (Indiana University Press, 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Moon-Kie Jung, “The Racial Unconscious of Assimilation Theory,” *Du Bois Review*, 6:2(2009), 375-395; Ruben Rumbaut, “Assimilation and Its Discontents: Between Rhetoric and Reality,” *The International Migration Review*, 31(4):1997, 923-960.

<sup>55</sup> On “model minority,” see Eungjun Min, “De-Mythologizing the ‘Model Minority’” in Eric Kramer (eds), *The Emerging Monoculture: Assimilation and the “Model Minority,”* (Praeger, 2003), 191-202; Philip Kasinitz, “Explaining Asian American Achievement,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(13):2016, 2391-2397.

<sup>56</sup> C. N. Le, “Different Stripes of the Tiger: A Comparison of Assimilation Outcome Between Vietnamese Americans and other Asian American Ethnic Groups,” (Diss., SUNY-Albany, 2004), 67.

enrolling in language and job training programs and attempting to become self-employed.”<sup>57</sup> What scholars like Rutledge praise as “resilience”<sup>58</sup> amongst Vietnamese Americans is in fact a response to the chronic scarcity of jobs and impoverishment resulting from economic restructuring in American urban centers. Even with these efforts, few were able to make it into the American middle-class, and instead face stagnant wages, underemployment, and little chances of social mobility.<sup>59</sup>

The constant regurgitation of how “Confucian” ethics denoting educational importance, social harmony, familial ties, discipline, and respect are translated into characteristics that help Vietnamese refugees become successful in a country so drastically different from their homeland highlights how that cliché of the “model minority” was appended upon this newly arrived group of migrants—presumably because of their origins in Asia. More problematic, while the literature presents a rosy image of Vietnamese American success, these migrants inevitably faced racialized discrimination and violence, highlighting the liminality of belonging in America’s “melting pot.”<sup>60</sup> Often presented as representative of the Indochinese refugee population, the emphasis on Vietnamese American successes, furthermore, discounts the variations of “achievement” between the Vietnamese and subgroups like the Cambodian, Laotian, and Hmong. Even within the Vietnamese American community itself, drastic differences exist between generations and migration cohorts.<sup>61</sup> The neat and simplified story of the assimilated Vietnamese American ignores the very real socio-economic challenges chronically facing the community, reinforces racist and orientalist myths, and, consequently, limits the types of subjectivities for which Vietnamese Americans can be understood and recognized.

Building on these critiques, the scholarship has expanded their scope for studying the Vietnamese American community, integrating diverse disciplines including political science, cultural studies, literary studies, and critical race studies. With a focus on the politics of Vietnamese American identity and community formation, Vietnamese American anticommunism emerges as an unavoidable subject for examination. It was not that early studies were unaware of the rampant anticommunism amongst Vietnamese Americans. Rather, Vietnamese American anticommunism is commonly seen as an accepted, unquestioned, and expected component of individuals who had fled a communist country. Freeman, for example, initially questioned “why so many Vietnamese were so virulently anti-Communist,” but quickly

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<sup>57</sup> Steve Gold and Nazli Kibria, “Vietnamese Refugees and Block Mobility,” *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 2(1):1993, 27-56.

<sup>58</sup> Rutledge, *The Vietnamese Experience in America*, xi.

<sup>59</sup> Steven J. Gold, *Refugee Communities: A Comparative Field Study*, (Sage, 1992); Steven J. Gold, “Differential Adjustment among New Immigrant Family Members,” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 17(4):1989, 408-432; Nazli Kibria, “Patterns of Vietnamese Refugee Women’s Wamework in the U.S.,” *Ethnic Groups*, 7:1989, 297-323; Bic Ngo and Stacey Lee, “Complicating the Image of Model Minority Success: A Review of Southeast Asian American Education,” *Review of Educational Research*, 77(4):2016, 415-453.

<sup>60</sup> Subarno Chattarji, “‘The New Americans’: The Creation of a Typology of Vietnamese-American Identity in Children’s Literature,” *Journal of American Studies*, 44(2):2010, 409-428; Karen Pyke and Tran Dang, “‘FOB’ and ‘Whitewashed’: Identity and Internalized Racism Among Second Generation Asian Americans,” *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(2):2003, 147-172; Thuy Vo Dang, “The Cultural Work of Anticommunism in the San Diego Vietnamese American Community,” *Amerasia Journal*, 31(2):2005, 64-86;

<sup>61</sup> Isao Takei, Arthur Sakamoto and ChangHwan Kim, “The Socioeconomic Attainments of Non-immigrant Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, and Vietnamese Americans,” *Race and Social Problems*, 5:2013, 198-212.

denoted the phenomenon as something “understandable” and reflected a desire “to let Americans know what it meant to live under Vietnamese Communist oppression.”<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Rutledge presented the Vietnamese as “individuals who undoubtedly needed refuge in the United States...[as] their ties to the US and South Vietnamese government targeted them for extinction by the northern army and their admission to the United States was necessary for their survival.”<sup>63</sup> Early scholars did not view anticommunism as something that was collective and ideological amongst the refugees, but instead as individual and attitudinal, resulting implicitly from what refugees had suffered through.

Despite the inability of the early scholarship to examine anticommunism in any serious manner, the various interviews, life stories, and qualitative data collected from the refugees were replete with anticommunist rhetoric, harrowing stories of communist atrocities, and efforts to combat American depiction of South Vietnam and the Republican government. In his introductions to a collection of Vietnamese life stories in *Hearts of Sorrow*, Freeman notes that “Many Vietnamese say they are particularly upset that the Communists are often presented idealistically, while the South Vietnamese Nationalists are described in unfavorable ways.” His respondents point to how portrayals of the war “seriously distort the events and omit the perspectives, not of the men who made the decisions, but of those who paid the consequences.”<sup>64</sup> Indeed, with intent to allow the Vietnamese to “express themselves in their own terms about subjects they considered important and wanted other Americans to hear,”<sup>65</sup> Freeman’s work is little more than a collection of translated life stories from Vietnamese respondents with little critical engagement. Indeed, more so a moral project rather than a scholastic one, Freeman’s virtual non-treatment of Vietnamese American anticommunism exemplifies how the early scholarship did not question nor probe the politics of the refugees.

In the more recent scholarship, anticommunism is a key factor for understanding the politics and culture of Vietnamese America. In tandem with the rise in Vietnamese American political visibility and participation in electoral politics, recent scholarship often notes the importance of anticommunism in explaining the community’s conservatism and support for the Republican Party. As Linda Vo argues, the “staunchly anti-Communist ideologies, pro-business policies, and traditional moral agendas” of the Republican Party appeal more so to the first generation of Vietnamese Americans than younger cohorts who are often born in the United States.<sup>66</sup> Anticommunism has been demonstrated to be an important factor in Vietnamese American political mobilization and activism. For Collet, Vietnamese Americans, by in large, view “politics in the United States as a virtual extension of the war against the North Vietnamese.”<sup>67</sup> The anticommunist politics in the community is a political resource, conjoining issues of “race, ethnicity, and evocative historical symbolism.”<sup>68</sup> Anticommunist mobilization

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<sup>62</sup> James M. Freeman, *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese American Lives*, (Stanford University Press, 1989), 5, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Rutledge, *The Vietnamese Experience in America*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Freeman, *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese American Lives*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>66</sup> Linda Trinh Vo, “The Formation of Post-Suburban Communities: Koreatown and Little Saigon, Orange County,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 24(7/8):2004, 15-45.

<sup>67</sup> Christian Collet, “Bloc Voting, Polarization, and the Panethnic Hypothesis: The Case of Little Saigon,” *The Journal of Politics*, 67(3):2005, 907-933.

<sup>68</sup> Christian Collet, “The Viability of ‘Going it Alone’: Vietnamese in America and the Coalition Experience of a Transnational Community,” *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 1(2):2008, 279-377.

has been noted to be strategically diverse, involving not just protests, but also “running for office, voting, and engaging in other conventional modes of civic participation.”<sup>69</sup>

While scholars in the political sciences address the role of anticommunism in Vietnamese American political engagement and electoral participation, scholars in Asian American Studies have advanced the notion that Vietnamese American anticommunism is best understood as a form of cultural politics. For much of this emerging literature, anticommunism is presented as a crucial component for understanding Vietnamese American memory engagement and community formation. Contesting the popular conception that Vietnamese American anticommunism is a form of reactive, conservative politics, Thuy Vo Dang argues that anticommunism is a “cultural praxis” or “a short-hand for a wide range of ideas and practices, from paying respect to one’s family and elders to educating the community and society at large about South Vietnam to maintain a Vietnamese culture in diaspora.”<sup>70</sup> As a “cultural discourse” anticommunism factors in as a source of solidarity, providing Vietnamese Americans with the shared discursive language and narratives to mourn, remember, and build a sense of belonging and commonality.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Aguilar San-Juan views anticommunism as a “political ideology” deployed by Vietnamese Americans to regulate their community’s boundaries, reinforce mass consumerism and commerce, provide “symbolization,” and engage in “strategic memory projects.”<sup>72</sup> More critically, Nhi T. Lieu’s examination of Vietnamese American popular culture highlights anticommunism as a mode of representation through which Vietnamese American institutions “symbolize the triumph of what South Vietnam *could have been* while they simultaneously create a market that produces and augments the desire for ethnicity.”<sup>73</sup> Anticommunism, on the one hand, serves to reinforce the norms of free market enterprise and global capitalism.<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, anticommunism provides the political rhetoric that “consolidates and strengthens Vietnamese exilic identities, defining for them what is properly ‘Vietnamese.’”<sup>75</sup>

These scholars view Vietnamese American anticommunism as a source of ethnic identity building and solidarity. Others like Caroline Valverde view the fervency of anticommunism in the community as a source of divisiveness and ideological strangulation.<sup>76</sup> As she notes, anticommunist demonstrations and protests have served to “advance the anticommunist

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<sup>69</sup> Nhu-Ngoc T. Ông and David S. Meyer, “Protest and Political Incorporation: Vietnamese American Protests in Orange County, California, 1975-2001,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 3(1):2008, 78-107.

<sup>70</sup> Thuy Thanh Vo Dang, “Anticommunism as cultural praxis: South Vietnam, war, and refugee memories in the Vietnamese American community,” (Diss., UC San Diego, 2008), 2.

<sup>71</sup> Vo Dang, “Anticommunism as cultural praxis,” 3, 25-26, 137-176, 219

<sup>72</sup> Karin Aguilar-San Juan, *Little Saigons: Staying Vietnamese in America*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 11-12, 63-64, 83, 136-140.

<sup>73</sup> Nhi T. Lieu, *The American Dream in Vietnamese*, (University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 29.

<sup>74</sup> Lieu, *The American Dream*, 27-31

<sup>75</sup> Lieu, *The American Dream*, 91.

<sup>76</sup> See also Kim Nguyen, “‘Without the Luxury of Historical Amnesia’: The Model Postwar Immigrant Remembering the Vietnam War through Anticommunist Protest,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 34(2):2010, 134-150; critical takes on viewing anticommunism as a conservative, “rabid” force, see Long S. Le, “Exploring the Function of the Anti-Communist Ideology and Identity in the Vietnamese American Diasporic Community,” *Journal of Southeast Asia American Education and Advancement*, 6:14(2011), 1-27 and Marguerite Nguyen, “Situating Vietnamese Transnationalism and Diaspora,” *Diaspora*, 18(3):2015, 382-391.

ideological perspective and control the mind-set of members of the diaspora.”<sup>77</sup> Vietnamese America, for Valverde, is a site of political contestation within which “friction” emerges between “staunch anticommunists” and those who desire change in the community. Articulating the position of more progressive elements within the community, Valverde highlights how the fervency of anticommunist allegiance by a “vocal minority” serves as a conservative force, hindering change, silencing dissenting voices, and preventing dialogue between members of the diaspora and those in Vietnam.<sup>78</sup>

Although the recent scholarship has established that anticommunism is an important component for understanding the structure, content, and forms through which Vietnamese Americans engage with their past, little, in fact, has been written on the actual history of anticommunism. That is, despite such emphasis on the past, memory, and “history,” the existing scholarship on Vietnamese Americans has not even begun questioning the historical *genesis* of anticommunism, its transformations across time and space, and how it is that this ideology became such a “mandatory,” influential and prevalent force.<sup>79</sup> For the most part, scholars conceive anticommunism as originating from some form of collective “hatred” directed against Vietnamese communism, supposedly emanating from “residual sentiments surrounding the [Vietnam] war,” or a product of the shared experiences of “loss” and exodus.<sup>80</sup> As CN Le argues, anticommunist “hatred” derives from the actions of the communists who “drove [the Vietnamese refugees] from their homeland and brutalized their family members, relatives, and friends.”<sup>81</sup> Similarly, San-Juan views the anticommunist “slant” in Vietnamese American renarration of their history is rooted in being “displaced forever from their homeland...[and thus are] particularly driven to assert their hatred and anger toward the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.”<sup>82</sup>

Virtually no scholastic work on Vietnamese Americans notes how the anticommunist politics of the community has already existed—as that “political ideology,” a mode of commemoration, a “cultural discourse,” something that defined “Vietnameseness”—long before the first Vietnamese refugee ever stepped foot on American shores. What this implies is the need to examine the discursive forms and political practices from South Vietnam, and the process through which these ideas and practices were transplanted into the refugee communities of Vietnamese America. To examine such a process, the scholarship must realize that anticommunism has a significance and historical depth that goes beyond contemporary memory works or political engagement. It is a set of knowledge and interpretations that had once informed South Vietnamese “political culture” and has transnationally traveled to inform “cultural politics” in Vietnamese America.

To arrive at this *socio-historical* understanding of anticommunism, the scholarship must first reconfigure its understanding of Vietnamese America’s past, its perception of the Vietnam War, and its engagement with the historical implications of that war. In the recent literature

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<sup>77</sup> Kieu Linh Caroline Valverde, *Transnationalizing Viet Nam: Community, Culture, and Politics in the Diaspora*, (Temple University Press, 2012), 14.

<sup>78</sup> Valverde, *Transnationalizing Viet Nam*, 113-144

<sup>79</sup> “Mandatory” is used to describe anticommunism in Vietnamese America by Linda Vo, “Vietnamese American Trajectories: Dimensions of Diaspora,” *Amerasia* 29(1):2003, ix-xviii.

<sup>80</sup> Valverde, *Transnationalizing Viet Nam*, 114

<sup>81</sup> C.N. Le, “Post-Vietnam War Tensions in the Vietnamese American Community,” in *Encyclopedia of Asian American Issues Today*, eds., Edith Wen-Chu Chen and Grace J. Yoo (ABC-Clio, 2010), 829-835.

<sup>82</sup> Aguilar-San Juan, *Little Saigons*, 63.

reviewed above, the treatment of the Vietnam War and its relationship to Vietnamese America largely conform to the “Critical Refugee Studies” approach outlined by Yen Le Espiritu in 2006. Her call for a redirection of the study of Vietnamese refugees (and refugees at large) rests on a critique of how Vietnamese refugees have been historically represented and subjectified in American discourse. For Espiritu, traditional scholarship have represented the Vietnamese as the “good refugee,” conjoining depictions of refugees as passive and pathetic victims in dire need of American “rescue,” with caricatures of Vietnamese Americans as part of the successful and assimilated Asian American “model minority. Such a depiction, on the one hand, reinforces orientaling narratives that “naturalizes Vietnam’s neediness and America’s riches.” It also allowed the US to retrieve its international legitimacy following its defeat in the Vietnam War. Writing in the context of another American war unfolding in Iraq and Afghanistan, Espiritu argues that the field must take the Vietnamese refugees as a site of critique, understanding their history and formation as “subjects of US war and imperialism.”<sup>83</sup>

Although Espiritu provides an eloquent, critical, and much-needed redirecting from the assimilation-centered frameworks of earlier studies, it is, nevertheless, one that is inadequate to address the ideological, historical and political scope of the Vietnamese American community. There are two main issues with such a framing. The first of which, and most pertinent to this dissertation, is the treatment of “Vietnamese subjectivity” as primarily a product of American involvement in Vietnam. Anticommunism, as such, is understood as something that results not from the South Vietnamese history of national formation, but seemingly a strategic response to the racial, political and social landscape of the United States. While one can agree that post-war American memory work has sought to repaint the Vietnam War as a “good war,” and that these efforts have led to the excision of the South Vietnamese side of the story, anticommunism in Vietnamese American cannot be reduced to something simply “asserted” by Vietnamese Americans because their history is excluded from American discourse. Nor is anticommunism merely something “adopted” by Vietnamese Americans to make themselves visible and understood.<sup>84</sup> Such a depiction implies the primacy of the United States in the making of anticommunism in the South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American context. It avoids discussions of how the Vietnamese themselves are primarily responsible for the historical crafting, development, dissemination, and, ultimately, transplantation anticommunist beliefs and practices.

Espiritu is correct to note that Vietnamese American subjectivity “cannot be exclusively defined within the US context.” However, it is further the case that these subjectivities did not solely emerge from the “US war in and occupation of Southeast Asia.” Anticommunism, as it existed in South Vietnam, was not some ideological import that came with “US ‘counterinsurgency’ actions, anticommunist insurgency, terrorism counteraction, and peacekeeping operations.”<sup>85</sup> It is a product of the activities of state-builders in South Vietnam who actively sought to institute anticommunism as *their own* state ideology—at times, through programs scorned, unratified, or contested by their American advisors. The conceptualization provided by Espiritu, ultimately, lends too great explanatory power to American hegemony, and

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<sup>83</sup> Yen Le Espiritu, “Toward a Critical Refugee Study: The Vietnamese Refugee Subject in US Scholarship,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 1(1-2):2006, 410-433.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

conflates the anticommunism of South Vietnam and Vietnamese America with the anticommunism that exists in American foreign policy.

Second, while Espiritu acknowledges that “Vietnam is a country and not a war,” she is primarily concerned the production of “American identities and for the shoring up of US militarism,” and thus leaves little room for excavating how Vietnamese subjectivities are historically forged, apart from those explicitly linked to American-related processes.<sup>86</sup> She does not provide a way to understand Vietnam as that “country” and recasts Vietnam—as traditionally done in the historiography of the war—as little more than a background for exploring and critiquing *American* actions and subjectivities. Here, I am not calling for the examination of some pre-migration, orientalized Vietnamese/Asian “culture” or the (re)discovery of some primordial essence to Vietnamese ethnicity. Rather, my critique lies in the need for proper engagement with processes of *nation-state formation* in this geographical space we now call Vietnam.

Vietnam, as Goscha notes, “only existed in its present national form for about eighty-three years and some months (as of 2016).”<sup>87</sup> Despite the familiar myth that Vietnam is a 2,000-year old nation, the term “Vietnam” was not widely utilized until nationalists like Trần Trọng Kim and Hồ Chí Minh deployed the concept to make claims of national sovereignty over what was immediately prior the French colonies of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China. As such, the idea of “Vietnam” is very much a modern construct, and consequently the idea of Vietnamese as a nationality. The bifurcation of Vietnam following the 1954 Geneva Accords formalized the contested geography upon which postcolonial nation-state formation in Vietnam occurred. Within the context of the Cold War, state-builders in North and South Vietnam followed ideologically antagonistic visions for their state formation projects, consequently creating different renditions of Vietnamese nationality and subjectivity. While the north pursued a communist model, influenced by revolutionary nation-building projects in China and the Soviet Union,<sup>88</sup> in the south, anticommunism was instituted as a state ideology guiding national formation. As war once erupted in 1961, South Vietnamese nation-state formation coalesced with war-making in South Vietnam.<sup>89</sup> Indicative of the South Vietnamese nation-building project, the task of “building the nation” *dựng nước* become inseparable from the need to “save the nation” *cứu nước* from communism.

The complexities of anticommunism so eloquently articulated in the recent literature on Vietnamese America, thus, have deep historical moorings. The diverse “praxis” that Vo Dang

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History*, (Basic Books, 2016), 1.

<sup>88</sup> Patricia Pelly, *Postcolonial Vietnam: new Histories of the National Past* (Duke University Press, 2002); Alexander Woodside, *Community and Revolution in Modern Vietnam*, (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976); Kim Ngoc Bao Ninh, *A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945-1965*, (University of Michigan Press, 2002); Xiaobing Li, *The Dragon in the Jungle: The Chinese Army in the Vietnam War* (Oxford University Press, 2020). Land reform policies in the North, for example, was directly drawn from the Maoist experience: Christine Pelzer White, *Land Reform in North Vietnam*, (University of Michigan Press, 1970), 37-39, 44; J. Price Gittinger, “Communist Land Policy in North Vietnam” *Far Eastern Survey* 28, no. 8 (1959), 113-126; Edwin E. Moise, “Land Reform and Land Reform Errors in North Vietnam,” *Pacific Affairs* 49, no. 1 (1976), 70-72.

<sup>89</sup> On state-formation and war-making, see Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, & Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back In*, (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-191; Brian D. Taylor, “Tilly Tally: War-Making and State-Making in the Contemporary Third World,” *International Studies Review* 10 (2008), 27-56.



identified is not something solely founded in the United States. This “praxis” of anticommunism had existed in South Vietnam in the nation’s commemorative practices, celebrations, and cultural productions. Citizens of the Republic of Vietnam had once mourned soldiers who died for the “just cause” of anticommunism, celebrated mythological heroes and heroines (like Trần Hưng Đạo and the Trung Sisters), and annually observed state-instituted anticommunist holidays. “Black April”—the annual commemorative holiday that marks the Fall of Saigon in 1975—is otherwise known as “Ngày Quốc Hận” [“Day of National Resentment” in its proper translation].<sup>90</sup> A holiday of the same name was, too, annually commemorated in *South Vietnam*. And, like its transmogrification into the Vietnamese American context, involved mass demonstrations, public speeches, and remembrance activities—all in denunciation of the “atrocities” of the Vietnamese communists. As an ideology supported by the coercive might of the South Vietnamese state, anticommunism was deployed to define and regulate the “boundaries” of belonging within a national community. While Vietnamese America does not properly have its own military or police forces, the actions of community members to protest, denounce, and, at times, enact violence against those who are deemed “communist sympathizers” or “Vietnamese traitors” can be historically traced to Republican-era policies that encouraged citizens to weed out communist “infiltrators, be “resolute” against the enemy’s propaganda, and, ultimately, put this adamancy into practice in the physical and political “extermination” of communists and their sympathizers. Reinforcing these citizen-level activities are the laws and decrees by various South Vietnamese governments to criminalize communist literature, organizations, activities, and even thoughts. At times, transgressions of these laws and national anticommunist norms can mean death, torture, and lengthy imprisonment.

The framework I am advancing approaches Vietnamese American anticommunism from its rootings in the state-formation and nation-building process that transpired in South Vietnam from 1954-1975. This approach does not obfuscate the attention to Vietnam as a “war” (as Espiritu fears), nor does it treat Vietnam as just a “country.” Rather, it takes South Vietnam as a site to explore the construction of Vietnamese subjectivity in the context of a geopolitically divided world, and how this process of national construction left lasting legacies in the identities, beliefs, and politics of contemporary Vietnamese America. This approach does not necessarily discount the interventionist role of the United States in shaping the historical happenings in Vietnam. However, rather than viewing the United States as a hegemonic force that unilaterally determined the beliefs and activities of the South Vietnamese (and subsequently Vietnamese Americans), US foreign policy and military activities are treated as the background upon which Vietnamese actors navigated, both in conformity and opposition. This Vietnam-centered approach, thus, diverges sharply from Espiritu’s call for the centering American subjectivity. Indeed, rather than utilizing the conflict in Vietnam and Vietnamese subjects to address the “shaping and articulation of US nationhood,” it will address the role of the United States only when they factor into how Vietnamese actors shaped and articulated their own Vietnamese nationalism and belonging.

To correct any misconceptions, I must emphasize that this dissertation is not a regurgitation of “the South Vietnamese side” of the story. While this study will engage with Vietnamese-language anticommunist texts, these texts are not taken at face value as some “correct” historical interpretation of the Vietnam War or South Vietnam. I follow in the tradition

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<sup>90</sup> Vo, “Anticommunism as Cultural Praxis,” footnote 168.

of constructionist theorists of the nation in viewing South Vietnam as sociohistorical construct.<sup>91</sup> In this view, what constituted “South Vietnam” is a consequence of the efforts by state and non-state actors to construct and develop an “imagined community” of anticommunist compatriots. The anticommunist texts that will be drawn upon for this dissertation are conceptualized as an essential component of how actors attempted to reify South Vietnam as a nation, as well as promote the idea that the Vietnamese Republican state properly represented Vietnam and the Vietnamese people as a whole. These texts are thus the building blocks for piecing together the anticommunist-cum-nationalist historiography that was deployed to rally citizens politically and ideologically around the anticommunist cause. They are often emotionally evocative, dispensing not only stories of harrowing “escapes” or tragic victimization at communist hands, but also myths and lore about Vietnamese primordiality and past. In this sense, the anticommunist texts to be discussed are rhetorically, ideologically, and politically tuned to the Republic of Vietnam’s *raison d’être*. In the post-1975 moment, familiar anticommunist symbolisms are deployed to give reason for these Vietnamese existence in the United States, while maintaining an ideological linkage to the South Vietnamese past.

### *South Vietnam in the Vietnam War Literature*

If Espiritu views the anticommunism of South Vietnam as historically negligible, she is not alone in doing so. In large part, the voluminous historiography on the Vietnam War has focused on the role of the United States and the Vietnamese communists in narrating the history of the conflict. Depicted as a war in which a peasant guerrilla force was able to defeat the most powerful and modernized armed force in the world, the Vietnam War has captured the imagination of peace activists,<sup>92</sup> military historians,<sup>93</sup> and scholars of empire alike.<sup>94</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>91</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (Verso:1983/2006); Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14; Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, (Polity Press, 1985) and *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford University Press, 1991); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>92</sup> Documenting the peace movement in the United States during the Vietnam War era, there is perhaps nothing more comprehensive than Melvin Small and William D. Hoover (eds.), *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (1992). Similar discussions on the immorality and blunders of the Vietnam War can be found in documentary films like *Sir No Sir!* (2005) by David Zeiger, *Hearts and Minds* (1974) by Peter Davis. W. D., and the recent documentary series *The Vietnam War* (2017) by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick.

<sup>93</sup> E.g., William Duiker, *Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam* (1990); [Cecil Currey] Cincinnatus, *Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army During the Vietnam War* (1981); Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (2001); Brian VanDeMark, *Into the Quagmire*, (1991); Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States and the Modern Historical Experience*, (2001);

<sup>94</sup> Contemporary articulation of the conflict in critical ethnic and postcolonial scholarship largely rearticulates critiques against the imperialist and racist project of the French and the Americans. This is reflected in the major works of scholars on Vietnamese America, including Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Count: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refugees* (2014), Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016), Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (2012), and Phuong Tran Nguyen, *Becoming Refugee American: The Politics of Rescue in Little Saigon* (2017). Deployment of the Vietnamese case to discuss broad theories and historical questions share similar framing of the conflict, such as Anne Raffin comparison of colonialism in India and Vietnam (“Native Policy and Colonial State Formation in Pondicherry [India] and Vietnam” in George Steinmetz (ed.), *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline* [2019], 415-435), Cary Fraser in discussing the intimacies between communism and decolonization (“Decolonization and

due to the antiwar movement and the deliberate deceptions by the American government over the conduct of the war, the victory of the communist guerrillas spelled not only American imperialist follies abroad, but also probed questions of morality and justice in America's ventures overseas, and problematized the American claim to be the world's champion for democracy and freedom.<sup>95</sup> For much of the literature, it is the Vietnamese communists who bore the mantle of nationalism, fighting for Vietnamese self-determination and independence from French colonial and American imperial rule.<sup>96</sup> Their victory not only reinforces the notion that the communists were on the "right side" of history, it also narrates the indomitable capability of an indigenous people to stand against an imperial force.<sup>97</sup>

Such historiography on the conflict, however, omits any serious discussion of the anticommunist nation being formed south of the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Indeed, despite the tendency for the literature to equate "national liberation" with the communist movement in Vietnam, it was the Saigon government rather than the communist insurgency that *really* deployed nationalism in the battle over the "hearts and minds."<sup>98</sup> In the traditional historiography of the conflict, South Vietnam and its anticommunist ambitions are often treated as "aberrant," uncomfortable historical anomalies that are best avoided, ignored, or explained away. When the Republic does have a role in the historiographic retelling, it is treated as a corrupt entity whose status as an American puppet is juxtaposed to the nationalist credentials of the Vietnamese communist movement.<sup>99</sup> The treatment of the Republic as a historical anomaly rather than a competing nationalist force has allowed much of the existing scholarship to disregard South Vietnam's

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the Cold War," in Richard Immerman and Petra Goedde (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* [2013]), Mark T. Berger's historical review of "Modernization Theory" ("Decolonisation, Modernisation and Nation-Building: Political Development Theory and the Appeal of Communism in Southeast Asia, 1945-1975," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 34, no. 3, [2003], 421-448), or Edward Said's discussion of the effects of empire (*Culture and Imperialism*, [1993], 131, 199, 264).

<sup>95</sup> E.g., Robert J. McMahon, "Contested Memory: The Vietnam War and American Society, 1975-2001," *Diplomatic History* 26, No. 2 (2002), 159-184; Viet Thanh Nguyen, "Just Memory: War and the Ethics of Remembrance," *American Literary History* 25, No. 1 (2013), 144-163; and George C. Herring, "America and Vietnam: The Unending War," *Foreign Affairs* 70, No.5 (1991), 104-119. Questions of morality is particularly notable in recent critique of American ventures into Iraq and Afghanistan like that of David Ryan and David Fitzgerald, "Iraq and Vietnam: Endless Recurrence or Stirrings Still?" *Critical Asian Studies* 41 (2009), 621-653; Melvin Small, "Bring the Boys Home Now! Antiwar Activism and Withdrawal from Vietnam—and Iraq," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3, (2010), 543-553; and Kenneth J. Campbell, *A Tale of Two Quagmires: Iraq, Vietnam, and the Hard Lessons of War* (2007). For American deceit, South Vietnamese incompetence, and immorality of the war, see also A. J. Langguth, *Our Vietnam: The War 1954-1975* (2002).

<sup>96</sup> Jeff Goodwin's widely cited book explained the Vietnamese communist's victory by beginning with the assumption that the communists monopolized the cause of anti-colonialist nationalism in Vietnam which translated to their success against the Americans during the Second Indochina War (*No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* [2001], 106-133). Benedict Anderson (1983)'s monumental book *Imagined Communities* referred exclusively to the "Marxist" movement to discuss the "popular nationalism" or "revolutionary nationalism" in the Vietnamese case (160-161). Odd Arne Westad (2007)'s influential *The Global Cold War* narrates the Vietnamese postcolonial national experience through the Vietnamese communist movement, (180-193).

<sup>97</sup> Duiker, *Sacred War*, 2; James Harrison, *The Endless War: Vietnam's Struggle for Independence* (1989).

<sup>98</sup> Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An: Revolutionary Conflict in a Vietnamese Province* (University of California Press, 1972), 179-81. Tuong Vu, "Vietnamese Political Studies and Debates on Vietnamese Nationalism," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 2, no. 2(2007). 175-230.

<sup>99</sup> This is most evident in Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*. See also Nu-Anh Tran's critique of existing Vietnamese Studies and Vietnam War literature ("Contested Identities: Nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam, 1954-1963," diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 1-15

political history, its role in the Vietnam War conflict, and its attempt to create an independent, modernized, and prosperous nation.

In recent years, this omission has spurred a wave of new studies focusing on the intellectual, diplomatic, political, and social dimensions of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Focusing on the nation-building process during the First Republic, Phillip Catton demonstrates that Ngô Đình Diệm's efforts, although highly flawed, was a well-intentioned endeavor towards a particular vision of Vietnamese modernity.<sup>100</sup> Edward Miller contests earlier portrayals of Diệm as an American puppet by highlighting the unique Personalist philosophy of First Republican President, his broad—at least initially—base of political support, and the conflicts between American foreign policy and South Vietnamese nation-building efforts.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, Geoffrey Stewart's study of the "Special Commissariat for Civic Action" recasts the national project of the Republic through the eyes of its state agents and state-builders. His work centers on the First Republic's endeavor for modernization through the cultivation of a new citizenry and establishment of a unique framework for a nation.<sup>102</sup> Aside from these political histories of the Republic, Olga Dror examined the production of youths in South Vietnam through a social history of schoolbooks and pedagogical texts.<sup>103</sup> Other recent works have explored urban ideology in South Vietnam,<sup>104</sup> cultural and political dynamics in Huế,<sup>105</sup> and community formation in Chợ Lớn-Saigon amongst Chinese ethnics during the war.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, emphasized in this "New Vietnam War scholarship" is the "agency" of the Southern Republic and its people in the making of war and nation.

Despite the growth of studies on the Republic of Vietnam and the much-appreciated turn towards the historical "agency" of South Vietnamese actors, a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the national project in South Vietnam remains lacking.<sup>107</sup> For one, recent studies have, in large part, prioritized the First Republican period at the cost of foregoing satisfactory analysis of historical continuity and change. While the Diệm administration was consequential in establishing the political and ideological foundations of the Republic, the period that followed is significant in transforming, contesting, redefining certain values laid out under Diệm. The defining works of the field, thus, have been limited by their periodization, often focusing on the early temporal slice of Republican history rather than examining the era as a whole.<sup>108</sup> This limitation has prevented the scholarship from systematically examining the

<sup>100</sup> Phillip E. Catton, *Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam*, (2003).

<sup>101</sup> Edward Miller, *Misalliance: Ngo Dinh Diem, the United States, and the Fate of South Vietnam*, (2013).

<sup>102</sup> Geoffrey C. Stewart, *Vietnam's Lost Revolution: Ngô Đình Diệm's Failure to Build an Independent Nation, 1955-1963* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>103</sup> Olga Dror, *Making Two Vietnams: War and Youth Identities, 1965-1975*, (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>104</sup> Tuan Hoang, "Ideology in Urban South Vietnam, 1950-1975" (Diss., University of Notre Dame, 2013).

<sup>105</sup> Huong Thi Diu Nguyen, "Eve of Destruction: A Social History of Vietnam's Royal City, 1957-1967," (Diss., University of Washington, 2017).

<sup>106</sup> Mei Feng Mok, "Negotiating Community and Nation in Cho Lon: Nation-building, Community-building and Transnationalism in Everyday Life during the Republic of Vietnam, 1955-1975" (Diss., University of Washington, 2016).

<sup>107</sup> Edward Miller and Tuong Vu, "The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War: Agency and Society in the Study of the Second Indochina War," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 4(3):2009, 1-16.

<sup>108</sup> Recent generalist histories of the Vietnam that treats the Republic of Vietnam as an actual historical actor in the conflict, like that of Christopher Goscha, *Vietnam: A New History* (Basic Books, 2016) and Keith Taylor (*A History of the Vietnamese* [Cambridge University Press, 2013], do not go nearly deep enough on the ideological, social, political, and institutional dimensions of the Republic to examine notions of continuity and change.

continuities of narratives, ideals, and visions, and has precluded theorization of how such continuity was possible within a context of radical change. While anticommunism is largely accepted as a crucial component of Republican politics, the history of how that anticommunism evolved, transformed, and adapted to the shifting political dynamics of the Republic remains in need of being written.

For another, scholars have not even begun to question the consequences of Republican era, particularly upon a refugee community whose contemporary political landscape is inextricably bound to the national formation process experienced in South Vietnam. If nation-building is the defining issue in the study of the Republic, the available scholarship has yet to address whether such state-led endeavors left any traces, influences, or legacies upon the people affected. Indeed, the Vietnamese refugees who fled the country following the Fall of Saigon carried with them the ideals, loyalties, and discourses once prevalent and hegemonic in South Vietnam. The construction and imposition of these ideational elements that once compelled an anticommunist nation into being cannot be taken lightly. Rather, because Republican anticommunism was “transposed” from South Vietnam to Vietnamese America, the scholarship must examine how this body of beliefs reached a level of significance that it *could* be carried across the Pacific and be re-institutionalized as the defining political character of a migrated community.<sup>109</sup>

In effect, this dissertation conjoins emerging discussions on the study of the Vietnam War and Vietnamese America through a historical sociology of “Republican anticommunism.” Despite a common subject of inquiry, these two scholarships are rarely engaged with simultaneously. Indeed, the lack of attention to developments within the Vietnam War literature has allowed scholars of Vietnamese American studies to provide little more than brief, contextual accounts to frame Vietnamese American history. Bringing these two fields into dialogue can build complexity and expand their empirical and theoretical horizons. On the one hand, if the scholarship on Vietnamese Americans lacks a historical understanding of anticommunism as it existed in South Vietnam, the “New Vietnam War studies” provides a framework for understanding how anticommunism was integrated into the South Vietnamese nation-building efforts. On the other hand, the focus of Vietnamese American scholarship on the diverse engagement with anticommunism as memory work and “cultural politics” implies that the war has lasting legacies beyond the 1975 marker.

On a broader theoretical level, examining the emergence, development, and utilization of anticommunism in South Vietnam and its eventual “transposition” into Vietnamese America can shift our discussions on not only Vietnamese Americans, but refugees and immigrants at large. Indicative in the review of scholarship on Vietnamese American in the previous section, attention to a migrant’s past (particularly Asian migrants) has largely focused on how some primordial, unchanging, ethnic culture from the homeland either benefitted or constrained the migrant group’s assimilation into the American society. Contesting these orientalizing and stereotypical assumptions about a migrant’s past requires that scholars take into serious

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<sup>109</sup> Manu Goswami, “Rethinking the Modular Nation Form: Toward a Sociohistorical Conception of Nationalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, No.4 (2002), 770-799. While Benedict Anderson focused on “transplanting” or “mimesis” of the national form, Goswami emphasized the “transposability of national imaginings.” As a “social form,” the nation is subjected to “dynamic reconfiguration” whenever and wherever it is applied. This redefinition of Anderson’s “modular nationalism” highlights the agentic and changeable constitution of nationalism rather than a “static replication” of structures.

consideration the processes of national and identity formation that came prior to a migrant's entry into the United States. A migrant groups' engagement with the modern does not only occur during encounters with a "different" culture and set of norms in the host society. Nor are assertions of ethnic identities and solidarity simply a product of challenges and opportunities faced in the post-migration context. Particularly for those migrants who arrived during the Cold War, many (like those from Southeast Asia, Taiwan, South Korea, Eastern Europe, and Latin America) had underwent periods of intense state-formation, nation-building, and warfare; periods that forged new nations, political identities, and forms of belonging, reflecting of how their respective countries engaged with geopolitics of the postcolonial era. These identities cannot be assumed to have been erased because these groups had been "assimilated" into American society.

Allen Chun has pointedly demonstrated how modern articulations of "culturality are products of its embeddedness in different sociopolitical processes...namely geopolitics."<sup>110</sup> In his examination of the varieties of "Chineseness" produced in specific locales, Chun moves away from superficial conceptualizations of culture and identity as "social fact sui generis" and instead locates the formation of modern subjectivities "within their respective historical contexts and underlying geopolitical formative processes."<sup>111</sup> These "processes" involve those historical "encounters with modernity," particularly colonialism, nationalism, state formation, and global capitalism. It is from these "encounters" that modern identities (defined as "a discourse, a social construct...grounded in other frames of reference") are produced. In large part a genealogical examination of different forms of Chinese nationalism, Chun highlights the heterogeneity in the spread of modernity and nationalism, the specific historical contexts in which people "encounter" these processes, the construction and institutionalization of these identities through nation-state formation, and their ongoing process of transformation.<sup>112</sup> Similarly, South Vietnamese, Vietnamese American, and anticommunist subjectivities cannot be taken as a "social fact sui generis." These identities are sociopolitical constructs that stem from local, historically rooted encounters with the modern. They emerged, are formed, institutionalized, and evolve through human engagement and positionality within larger-scale processes. For this dissertation, the focus will be on nation-state formation in South Vietnam and the extended impact of this process in the refugee communities of Vietnamese America.

As scholars on Vietnamese America have long identified, engagement with the past is a crucial component for understanding the politics and culture of the community. However, it is how we define and understand that past that needs rectification. We cannot dilute that past to some "Confucian" culture nor situate that past exclusively within the context of assimilation. It is further the case that as the field moves towards Vietnamese American memory engagement and political discourse, scholars must be able to historicize how these ideational factors emerged, developed, and transformed, lest fall into the trap of ahistoricity and presentism.<sup>113</sup> In this sense, scholars must move away from documenting Vietnamese Americans as simply assimilable immigrants or traumatized refugees. The solution, as Espiritu right points out, is to understand

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<sup>110</sup> Allen Chun, *Forget Chineseness: On the Geopolitics of Cultural Identification*, (SUNY Press, 2017), x.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-7.

<sup>113</sup> For an argument regarding the importance historical facts in memory studies, see Gary Alan Fine, *Difficult Reputations: Collective Memories of the Evil, Inept, and Controversial*, (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 17-19.

that “Vietnamese subjectivity” is not exclusively produced in the American context.<sup>114</sup> But such subjectivity is not merely a product of American intervention and involvement.

Espiritu had once pointed to how policies from the Immigration and Naturalization Services during the 1980’s placed “the burden of proof of refugee status” upon the Vietnamese asylum seekers, assigning priority to those who could demonstrate victimization from communism. In her view, this process had “reduc[ed] the multifaceted histories of the Vietnam War and their flight into a single story about communist persecution,” and thus had confined American understanding of the Vietnamese as, almost exclusively, “anticommunist subjects.”<sup>115</sup> The issue was that this “interpellation” resulted in the refugees adopting this anticommunism as the primary subjectivity through which they could be understood within the American context. As Espiritu argues, Vietnamese refugees thus “unwittingly” conform to American expectations and became “used in justification of empire by those who claim to have fought for [their] freedom.”<sup>116</sup> Apart from treating Vietnamese American anticommunism as just some form of Vietnamese “false consciousness,” Espiritu discounts the drastic efforts of the Republican government—over the course of nearly two decades—to imbue citizens with an “anticommunist subjectivity.”<sup>117</sup> If Vietnamese refugees were funneled through a system which prioritized those who faced “communist repression or persecution,”<sup>118</sup> that process did not *create* the anticommunist Vietnamese. Rather, it reinforced identities and ideations that were historically already there.

In effect, Vietnamese America must be understood as a community constructed through the reutilization of ideas and practices institutionalized through the course of national formation in South Vietnam. Vietnamese Americans, in this sense, are displaced former citizens of an anticommunist Republican nation. The political constitution of Vietnamese American is characterized not only by the violence of war, but also a nation-building and state-formation within the context of the Cold War. Postcolonial nations like the Republic of Vietnam faced a global environment of geopolitical bipolarity, decolonization, and competing visions and paths promising the achievement of modernity.<sup>119</sup> Within this context, national formation in South Vietnam reflected broader trends of utopianism, militarization, and state-led modernization that had characterized much of the Third World.<sup>120</sup> The intensity of the national formation process

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<sup>114</sup> Espiritu, “Toward a Critical Refugee Study.”

<sup>115</sup> Espiritu, *Body Counts*, 55.

<sup>116</sup> 96-97, citing Laura Wexler, “Tender Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform,” in Shirley Samuels (ed.), *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, (Oxford University Press, 1992), 9-38.

<sup>117</sup> “Anticommunist subjectivity” here used as an extension of Espiritu’s concept of Vietnamese refugees as “anticommunist subjects.”

<sup>118</sup> Espiritu, *Body Counts*, 55.

<sup>119</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War*, (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-7

<sup>120</sup> Although a comparative study between South Vietnamese national formation and other emerging nation-states of the Cold War era is not the subject of this dissertation, I find aspects of the South Vietnamese experience reflected in patterns of utopianism, militarization, and state-led modernization in a variety of Third World contexts, particularly those found in Eric Weitz, *Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation* (Princeton University Press, 2005), Karl D. Jackson, “Ideology of Total Revolution” in (ed.) Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death* (2014), 37-78, Allen Chun, “From Nationalism to Nationalizing: Cultural Imagination and State Formation in Postwar Taiwan,” in (ed.) Jonathan Unger, *Chinese Nationalism*, 129, Insook Kwon, “Militarism in My Heart: Militarization of Women’s Consciousness and Culture in South Korea,” (Diss., 2000), 35-56, Benjamin A.

during the Republican period bears itself heavily upon the exilic politics of Vietnamese refugees, influencing the political conversations, imagination, and identities of these refugees, as well as how these refugees engage with opportunities and challenges in a migrated world. In this regard, to study Republican Vietnam is to study the constitutive precursors of Vietnamese America.

### *Defining Republican Anticommunism*

This dissertation conceptualizes anticommunism as a hegemonic ideology that is socially and historically constructed. By ideology, I mean a systematic set of beliefs, narratives, and assumptions that human actors draw upon to guide their actions and interpret their social world. Historically, Republican anticommunism was a) developed as the national ideological product of the Republic of Vietnam, b) promoted and instituted by South Vietnamese state builders who viewed popular loyalty to the anticommunist cause as paramount to the survival of the Republic and the defeat of communism in Vietnam, c) transformed into prevalent political framework of interpretation, widely deployed and drawn upon by state and non-state actors alike, and, finally, d) transported along with Vietnamese refugee bodies following the war and were drawn upon by these refugees to construct their communities abroad. Far from the automatic or natural consequence of collective or personal trauma, anticommunism became socially prevalent through the activities of South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American political actors to build, promote, and institutionalize the anticommunist ideas and practices. I term this sociopolitical, ideological construct “Republican anticommunism.” I use the descriptor “Republican” to highlight both the original historical context under which this particular ideology was conceived and enacted, as well as the ideal to which the ideology harkens—that is, the establishment of a modern republic.

By “hegemonic” I mean the pervasive and dominating presence of an ideology that is reinforced and supported through power. Hegemonic ideas are created in service of those with authority, are often imposed through coercion and manipulation, and are the institutionalized consequences of past political conflicts and struggles. Because hegemonic ideologies are pervasive and supported through authority, they are largely unquestioned, internalized, and taken-for-granted sources of knowledge within a given society, becoming “truth” or “knowledge” through regularization and use.<sup>121</sup> Rather than static and unchanging, ideologies are a “process of continuous creation,” fluid and everchanging and are shaped by the historical engagement of human actors.<sup>122</sup> While core assumptions within an ideology framework can remain relatively stable, new concepts, terminologies, and narratives can be grafted upon preexisting ideas, expanding their scope, relevance, and utility. As a hegemonic ideology, Republican anticommunism pervaded virtually all aspects of South Vietnamese society, shaping not only the national politics of South Vietnam, but also its laws, education, literature, music, and arts.

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Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (Cornell University Press, 2004), 14; Sinisa Malsevic, *The Sociology of War and Violence*, (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 8-11.

<sup>121</sup> The “descriptive vocabulary of day-to-day existence through which people make rough sense of the social reality they live in and create from day-to-day” (Fields, Karen and Barbara Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life*, NY: Verso, 2012: 134).

<sup>122</sup> Citation from Adamson, Walter, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci’s Political and Cultural Theory*, Berkeley: UC Press, 1980, 174. Producers of knowledge ranged from parents and teachers to politicians, “experts,” and intellectuals (Lears, “The Concept of Cultural Hegemony”).



Nu-Anh Tran conceptualizes the anticommunism of South Vietnam as an alternative form of Vietnamese nationalism. Drawing on Brubaker, Tran argues that the Republic of Vietnam is best understood as a postcolonial “nationalizing state,” or a statist project premised on the idea that the state legitimately belongs to a core nation whose welfare and interests should be promoted by a government representing and led by a specific ethnic or cultural group.<sup>123</sup> The global bifurcation resulting from the geopolitics of the Cold War, however, allowed for the emergence of “contested nationalism,” or competing political, nation-state producing projects by co-ethnics. Such a case squarely fits with Vietnam, which was divided between competing nationalizing states—one allied to the Soviet Union in the north and another allied to the “Free World” in the south. Thus, while Vietnamese identity defined the Republic ethnically (a characteristic shared with the communist north), anticommunism defined the Republic of Vietnam politically (allowing contesting forms of nationalism to manifest).<sup>124</sup>

As the defining political characteristic of the “nationalizing” project south of the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel, tremendous state resources were placed into the production, reinforcement, and dissemination of Republican anticommunism. The Republican state encouraged the production of anticommunist texts, literatures, and cultural productions, while simultaneously using draconian measures to crackdown and eliminate communist influences and political enemies within its national realm. Republican anticommunism, in this sense, can be seen as possessing a “dual character,” manifesting in Republican history as both a “political ideology” (something articulated by regimes and social movements to “legitimate authority, mobilize political support, and achieve social control”) as well a “cultural script” (something “tacitly shared” by which people draw upon to interpret and frame social relations, create solidarity, and inform their daily lives and routines).<sup>125</sup>

As Tran pointedly made clear, although a state ideological product, this anticommunist nationalism nevertheless relied on the support of elites and intellectuals who “provided the ‘nation work’ to transform [state-derived ideas] into meaningful, nationalizing narratives.”<sup>126</sup> This “nation work” was heavily populated by northern emigres who fled south following the partitioning of the country in 1954.<sup>127</sup> A large part Catholics, these northern emigres were selectively favored for governmental, political, and cultural positions within the Republic. These emigres provided the bulwark of support for the Republican regime in its early years and their experiences from the north provided the substance of anticommunist tracts condemning

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<sup>123</sup> Tran, Nu-Anh, “Contested Identities: Nationalism in the Republic of Vietnam (1954-1963),” (Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2013), 15; citing Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 83.

<sup>124</sup> “Contested nationalism” defined on p. 12-15, Tran, “Contested Identities.”

<sup>125</sup> The “dual character” of nationalism is cited from Jose Itzigsohn and Matthias vom Hau, “Unfinished imagined communities: States, social movements, and nationalism in Latin America,” *Theory & Society*, 35:2006, 193-212. Nationalism as political ideology, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford University Press, 1983), Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, (Blackwell, 1986), and Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1978: Programme, Myth, Reality*, (Cambridge University Press, 1990). For nationalism as “cultural script,” the best articulation is in Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Similarly, see Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, (Harvard University Press, 1992).

<sup>126</sup> Tran, “Contested Identities,” 16.

<sup>127</sup> “Nation work” is used by Tran in accordance with Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid, ed., “Introduction: Nation and Identities in Asia,” in *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities* (University of Michigan Press, 2000), 1-16.

“communist atrocities” and legitimizing the nascent anticommunist nation. The contribution of intellectuals and elites to the nationalizing project in South Vietnam “transformed anticommunism from an abstract catchphrase into a widely recognized sentiment,” becoming the defining characteristic of political life in the Republic.<sup>128</sup>

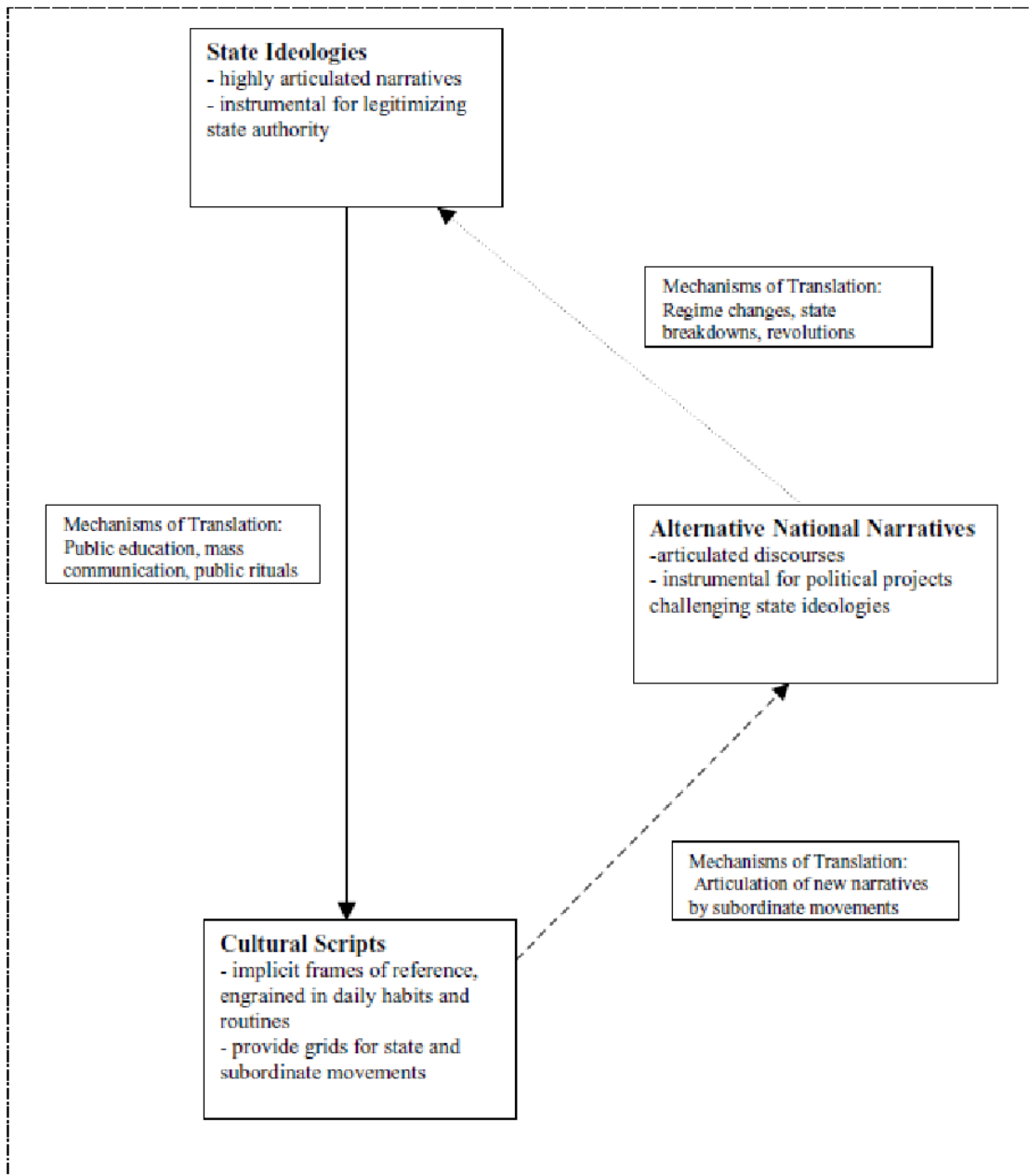
Itzigsohn and vom Hau outline a theory of transformation and evolution of nationalism. Drawing from cases in Latin America, the authors highlight how contestation between the state and societal forces shape and reshape particular articulations of nationalism, citizenship, and belonging. In Itzigsohn’s and vom Hau’s framework, “state ideologies” are disseminated to the wider public through state-controlled channels and institutions which serve in legitimizing the regime in power. Through this process, state ideas are transformed into the “cultural scripts” guiding the quotidian activities and routines of the nation. However, because these state-derived ideas are prevalent and hegemonic within the broader society, they can also serve as interpretative “grid” for subordinate actors seeking to expand or modify existing notions of citizenship and national belonging. Non-state actors, thus, can reappropriate state ideas, translating them into alternative renditions of nationalism that challenge dominant forms articulated by the state. In moments of regime changes and state breakdown, these “alternative national narratives” can replace dominant versions of nationalism if new political coalitions with the oppositional movement are formed and successfully seize state power.<sup>129</sup> A model of their theory is illustrated below.

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<sup>128</sup> Tran, “Contested Identities,” 16

<sup>129</sup> Jose Itzigsohn and Matthias vom Hau, “Unfinished imagined communities: States, social movements, and nationalism in Latin America,” *Theory & Society*, 35:2006, 193-212.

Graph 1: Figure of Itzigsohn's and vom Hau's framework.



Itzigsohn's and vom Hau's framework of how state discourses are propagated, taken hold of, and modified through state-society relations provides a useful general model for understanding the transformation of Republican anticommunism in South Vietnam. States, in their framework, play a crucial role in the establishment and maintenance of national discourse. They respond to challenges by other elites and social forces who advance alternative

interpretations of citizenship and the nation, and these contesting activities ultimately shape and reshape the content and scope of the dominant national ideology. As the authors write, “these struggles over national belonging may lead to the establishment of pervasive and long-lasting imageries, or to discursive formations characterized by persistent instability and contestation.”<sup>130</sup> In the case of South Vietnam, both of these patterns partially manifest. Although Republican anticommunism remained hegemonic and dominant throughout the Republican era, it was subjected to rectification and modification precisely because it was consistently challenged by excluded elites and social movements. Indeed, as regimes rose and fell across Republican history, they drew upon the ideational creations of their predecessors, faced new forms of contestations by different actors, and, consequently, made changes and reinterpretations to the existing discourse. Narratives and scripts created at one moment in Republican history were later redeployed under quite different historical contexts to interpret to unfolding developments and to aid in legitimizing new coalitions and regimes.

Most crucial to the discussions in this dissertation is the movement of ideas from “state ideologies” to “cultural scripts.” Here, Itzigsohn and vom Hau highlight the importance of the “ideological capacities” of states. States disseminate their discourses through institutions and channels for mass mobilization. The states ability to successfully disseminate their official national discourses aid to “secu[re] their translation into cultural scripts.” In other words, state-sponsored discourses do not simply remain within the state itself; rather, they “aim” to become something pervasive, regular, and accepted within the broader society.<sup>131</sup> This “ideological capacity” can be seen as a function of what Michael Mann refers to as the “infrastructural power” of states to “penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.”<sup>132</sup> For Mann, it is the command over the infrastructural power (organized penetration into society through various techniques) that provide states with autonomous capability in action. As Mann stresses, “autonomous state power is the product of the usefulness of enhanced territorial-centralization to social life in general.” The state’s organizational capability fulfills functions that other groups within society cannot do and, thus, provides the state with functional autonomy, making it a central actor in social affairs. Appropriating “‘free-floating resources,’ not tied to any particular interest group, able to float throughout the territorially defined society,” the state reorganizes these resources and redeploys them in a centralized, systematic manner. For Mann, this process allows states to monopolize various forms of power—military, political, ideological, and economic power—over its competitors in society, and thus making it a unique actor in any given society.<sup>133</sup>

This state capacity for organized, systematic, and regular “penetration” into society helps explain how state-derived ideas can be transformed into hegemonic “cultural scripts.” Mann conceptualizes “ideological power” as “deriv[ing] from the human need to find ultimate meaning in life, to share norms and values, and to participate in aesthetic and ritual practices with others.”<sup>134</sup> States, ultimately, seize upon existing desires for belonging and meaning within a

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Mann, “The autonomous power of the State: its origins, mechanisms, and results,” *European Journal of Sociology*, 25(2): 1984, 185-213.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power: Volume 3: Global Empires and Revolution, 1890-1945*, (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6.

society, provide organized and articulate answers that speak to these desires, and deploy these narratives systematically and consistently. The state's ability to penetrate society allows it to render its own versions of values, norms, and meaning as what is morally correct, as what is "truth," and what is obvious and normal. As such, ideas articulated by states are consequential for understanding prevalent and hegemonic ideas within any given society. These ideas, indeed, are not "neutral"—they benefit and reinforce the legitimacy of states.<sup>135</sup>

As an ideology, Republican anticommunism derives power from its ability to speak the need for people in South Vietnam to find shared meaning and solidarity. But what those ideational aspects ultimately entail stems from the Republican state's capacity to "penetrate" the Republican civil society ideologically. The Republican state's ability to penetrate society with its messages results from its organization of ideological production and dissemination. This activity is centralized, consistent, and systematic, providing the Republican state an advantage over other competing societal forces. It commands the key cultural and ideological institutions of the Republican society—"public education, mass communication, and public rituals"<sup>136</sup>—and thus monopolizes ideological power. Control over these institutions provides the infrastructure that allow state ideas to become so prevalent and dominating. The narratives that the Republican state disseminates through these institutions, on the one hand, provide meaning and values that speaks to societal need for belonging. On the other hand, it functions to legitimize the Republican's state governance and rule, providing the *raison d'être* for the state—and the nation's—existence.

However, while states can systematically convey their messages through institutions, those state-sponsored narratives must also be adopted and accepted by the broader society. This process is what Eric Selbin had termed "consolidation."<sup>137</sup> In contrast to "institutionalization" which denotes the process of "state-building" that often follows a revolutionary seizure of power, Selbin develops the parallel concept of "consolidation" to speak to the responses or support of a society to the values, programs, and agendas imposed by the revolutionary regimes. In Selbin's view, people matter in the construction of new regimes. It is not enough that states articulate their ideas through institutions for new ideas to take hold. States also must provide mechanisms through which people actively and regularly encounter and engage with these ideas. Selbin argues that "consolidation" operates through political participation, mass campaigns, and state-sponsored activities—formal and mobilizing mechanisms through which people become involved and included in the revolutionary process. Participation in these activities was not the

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<sup>135</sup> Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, 6-9.

<sup>136</sup> Jose Itzigsohn and Matthias vom Hau, "Unfinished imagined communities: States, social movements, and nationalism in Latin America," *Theory & Society*, 35:2006, 193-212.

<sup>137</sup> While Selbin developed the concept of "consolidation" as tool for understanding social revolutions, it can be appropriated to understand efforts by the Republican state to radically transform South Vietnamese society. The nation-building activities in South Vietnam, in fact, had been deemed "counter-revolutionary," (Fred Halliday, *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power*, [Duke University Press, 1999], 211). Nevertheless, Republican nation-building shared key commonalities with socialist revolutions of the Cold War era. The Republic of Vietnam did not come into being through popular uprising or guerrilla warfare as commonly understood of social revolutions. However, the various Republican administrations sought to radically transform aspects of the South Vietnamese society, particularly in the realm of culture, politics, and ideas. While it goes beyond the scope of this dissertation to comprehensively address the social transformations that occurred under the Republic vis-à-vis other emerging nations of era or the degree to which transformations under the Republic could constitute as a "social revolution," it suffices to note that the Republican state-builders pursued utopian visions to radically alter their conditions of "underdevelopment" and build a model, "progressive" *tiền bộ* Vietnamese society..

mindless incorporation of state values and ideas, but rather active engagement through which people contested, evaluated, and modified the goals and aims of the revolution. The agency and interpretations of people directly involved in the revolutionary process matters in this regard, and successful consolidation only arrives through negotiation and collaboration between the revolutionary state and revolutionizing society. For Selbin, the success of the consolidation process “is measured by the degree to which the population adopts the core of the social revolutionary project not simply in words but in deeds.”<sup>138</sup> Thus, people must not only think revolutionarily; they had to act in such manners as well.

The focus on active engagement with new ideas and interpretations at the crux of Selbin’s concept of “consolidation” is useful for understanding how Republican anticommunism was incorporated as the defining “cultural script” that guided daily and regular activities within South Vietnamese society. In essence, it is this process of “consolidation” that explains how those under the governance of the Republican state became more than just a compliant populace, but an active, politically inspired citizenry whose loyalties and values were bound to the idea of an anticommunist Vietnamese nation. Citizens attended annual holidays condemning “communist atrocities,” read popularly produced anticommunist literature and texts, attended publicly delivered oral testimonies detailing victimization by communists, participated in mass rallies, marches, and mass-based forms “nation work.” Although state-sponsored, these activities were, nevertheless, engaged in critically and creatively by those who view themselves as part of the Republican nation. They, like citizens of other emerging or revolutionary states, contested, evaluated, and reinterpreted state discourses through political participation. The prevalence of state messaging, thus, provides the first component of making Republican anticommunism into a hegemonic political and cultural discourse; citizen’s active engagement with these ideas through collective activity provides the second. As such, this dual process characterized by “ideological capacity” of states and ideological “consolidation” through the populace allows Republican anticommunism to transform from something new, novel, and centrally-located at its point of conception into a taken-for-granted framework of interpretation, widely deployed by both state and non-state actors alike.

The duality of the state ideological dissemination and broader incorporation into the routines and daily lives of the society frames the making of citizens under the Republic. Citizen-formation in the Republic, as with a number of other postcolonial states during the Cold War, went alongside ambitions to radically transform the existing society from a “backwards,” underdeveloped former colony into a fully-fledged modern nation. This utopian ambition is reflected in the Personalist philosophy of the First Republic which sought “total liberation” of man from not only his material wants, but also his “spiritual” needs. Envisioned in the Diệm administrations quest to form a “Personalist Revolution” was the creation of “new” men and women, with new sets of values, new morals, and new sense of collective purpose and belonging. Endeavoring the total transformation of South Vietnam, the Personalists promised a society where everyone would “have enough to eat, warm clothes to wear” [*com no áo ấm*], and a future in which every citizen would be afforded the total “flourishing” of their creative and productive capabilities. Although efforts to create a “Personalist Republic” became defunct

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<sup>138</sup> Quote from Eric Selbin, *Modern Latin American Revolutions*, (Westview Press, 1993/1999), 21; On theoretical conception of consolidation, see 19-29, 32-33; On long term effects of the consolidation process, see Nicaraguan case, 110-125.

following the death of Diệm in 1963, elements of the utopian promise remained. Like the First Republic, policies of subsequent regimes aimed at not only transforming the material infrastructure of society, but also the thoughts and habits of citizens. Throughout the Republican era, various elites and regimes sought to heighten the “civic aptitude” *dân trí* of the population, “strengthen” *lành mạnh hóa* the national body by changing popular mindset and habits, and promote mass engagement in hygiene campaigns, sports, and literacy programs.

In large part led by the Information Ministry, these efforts by the Republican state to “subjectify” its populace provided the mechanisms through which the mass of the South Vietnamese citizenry acquire an anticommunist “subject position”—or, to return to Espirito, an anticommunist “subjectivity.” Alongside creating this political atmosphere of pervasive and intense anticommunist messaging, civilians were mobilized and actively encouraged to participate in state projects and campaigns, attend “study sessions,” march in state-sponsored rallies, contribute cultural and artistic works, and publicly vocalize their disdain for communism. By generating an anticommunist political culture and sponsoring mass-based anticommunist engagement, the Republican state created avenues through which state derived concepts, terminologies, and narratives became familiar, prevalent, and, in some respects, internalized amongst the citizenry.

However, far from some “false consciousness” or uncritical internalization of the state’s dogma, historical actors can strategically appropriate narratives and scripts developed by those in power to engage in diverse forms of resistance. In his critique of Gramscian hegemony, James Scott argues that just because people express or conform to hegemonic ideas, it does not follow that they are somehow brainwashed or “unwittingly” participating in their own domination. As Scott writes: “Most acts of power from below, even when they are protests—implicitly or explicitly—will largely observe the ‘rules’ even if their object is to undermine them.”<sup>139</sup> Subordinate actors may pay “homage” to the “official script” in order for their voices to be heard by the power that be. They engage in a “strange theatre,” and serve not only strategically, but those aspects of the hegemonic script can often be “a valuable political resource in conflict and even in rebellion.”<sup>140</sup> Although hegemonic discourses condition what can be imagined, said, or written, it is nevertheless an adaptive form of knowledge that provides room for manipulation, appropriation, and change.<sup>141</sup> In this sense, what matters is how that discourse is used and by whom.

Our historical discussion in later chapters will demonstrate how citizens of the Republic strategically appropriated the available terminologies, narratives, and political concepts to engage with, and contest against, the various Republican regimes in power. Simultaneously, the Republican anticommunist discourse provided a political language through which actors mass mobilize, attack political opponents, and build coalitions.<sup>142</sup> Both state and non-state actors in

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<sup>139</sup> James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale University Press, 1990), 93.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 90-107.

<sup>142</sup> Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harre, “Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves,” *Journal for The Theory of Social Behavior* 20:1(1990), 43-63. In Foucauldian theory, subjects are relegated positions based on *epistemes*, or “discursive apparatus” from which they are authorized to speak. These positions are legitimized within a field of knowledge (site of power) (see Power, “Foucault and Sociology,” 38-39); Subjects are thus “produced,” demonstrating the “positive” effects of power exercise, (Michel Foucault “Truth and Power: an interview with Michel Foucault,” *Critique of Anthropology*, vol. 4, is. 13-14 (1979), 131-147; Seamus Barker, “Subject to pain:

South Vietnam drew upon this collective anticommunist discourse upon to engage in politics, produce literature, demonize opponents, commemorate heroes, and interpret the collective past—or, to appropriate Vo Dang, participate in the anticommunist “cultural praxis” that would be replicated in Vietnamese America. This usage and reusage of the Republican anticommunist discourse over the course of the Republican history allowed narratives that were once novel at the point of inception to be taken-for-granted truths. The changeability of Republican anticommunism to speak to different events and developments and its sustained interpretative relevance to South Vietnamese actors helps explain why Republican anticommunism, although originating from the First Republic, continued to exist until the Fall of Saigon. Indeed, while Diệm and his administration were demonized following his assassination in 1963, those who later rose to power, nevertheless, endeavored to build and sustain the anticommunist Vietnamese nation that the First Republic had envisioned. In doing so, later state-builders drew on familiar anticommunist narratives, terminologies, and political concepts to guide policies, institute laws, build political culture, and legitimize their own rule. Thus, while the Republican national project would ultimately end in failure in 1975, the widespread prevalence and survival of Republican anticommunism as a collective discourse demonstrate its successful “consolidation” in South Vietnam.

This consolidation of Republican anticommunism in the South Vietnamese “nationalizing” project is a necessary condition for its existence in Vietnamese America. Indeed, the anticommunist politics of Vietnamese America is very much dependent on the political legitimacy and nationalist symbolism that were developed and popularized during the Republican era. Vietnamese Americans continue to rely on the South Vietnamese national flag, sing the Republican national anthem, and glorify South Vietnamese national heroes. Most indicatively, however, is that the narratives, terminologies, and concepts developed during the Republican era continue to be deployed in contemporary Vietnamese America. On the one hand, Vietnamese Americans continue to narrate their collective history through the framework of communist victimization and present their anticommunist politics as one that safeguards the diaspora from communist infiltration and subversion. On the other hand, anticommunism serves as a political language upon which competing factions and personalities draw to attack one another or to acquire political legitimacy. As shared discourse that provides answers about Vietnamese American identity and collective past, anticommunism serves as a source of solidarity and is often activated for community mobilization. Intricately linked to workings of power within the Vietnamese American community, anticommunism has been deployed to legitimize the policing of the community’s boundaries, socially ostracize community members, and even to commit murder and assassinations.

These forms of engagement with anticommunism in Vietnamese America, as this introduction had consistently argued, are not particularly new. Rather, from collective commemoration to violence against suspected communists, these forms of anticommunist engagements have precursors in the South Vietnamese nationalizing experience. The history of

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Ricoeur, Foucault, and emplotting discourses in an illness narrative,” *Subjectivity* 10, 393-410). The production of subject constitutes Foucault’s entire “genealogical” project (Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry* 8:4(1984), 777-795). On “positive” aspects of punishment, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 23-24); See also Steven Lukes’ excellent summary of Foucauldian concept of power in *Power: A Radical View* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 88-99.



how Republican anticommunism became reconstituted in Vietnamese America is the subject of the last empirical chapter of this dissertation. It suffices now to note, however, that the remaking of the South Vietnamese past is intricately tied to the reconstitution of former South Vietnamese military and political elites as leaders within the emerging Vietnamese diaspora—a process that was, in part, aided by the Cold War immigration policies of the United States. However, it is inaccurate to suggest, as Espiritu does, that US policies *made* the Vietnamese anticommunist subject. These policies did *remake* Republican anticommunism into a discursive and political form that more closely conformed to the “social and political landscape” of the United States.

### *The Making of an Anticommunist Citizen/Subject*

To explore the process of nation-state formation in South Vietnam, this dissertation utilizes an unstudied ideological education initiative called the “Political Study Program” *Chương Trình Học Tập Chính Trị* (PSP). Implemented as a core component of the “Communist Denunciation Campaign” *Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng* in 1955, the PSP was one of the few state programs that was inaugurated at the formation the Republic of Vietnam and survived to its collapse in 1975. Although the PSP was designed to be enacted on a national, mass level, it was most effectively implemented amongst the civil servants and soldiers of the Republican state. The longevity of the Program, in part, is explained by a continual and fierce belief on the part of Republican state-builders that human beings could be transformed through regular and compulsory ideological rectification. Routinized and standardized through the course of Republican history, 20-odd years of PSP operations entailed weekly or monthly presentations, reading materials, and discussion. Through “study cells,” orchestrators of the PSP sought to cultivate state agents who were versed in the nationalist, anticommunist, and modernist vision of the Republican project. By internalizing the propagated ideals, civil servants and soldiers were to be transformed into active, committed, and politicized “cadres” who could properly enact the policies of the Republican state.

Directed by the Information Ministry and its various reconfigurations, the operations of the Program penetrated virtually every administrative organ in the Republic. From ministerial heads to secretaries to police officers and security guards, all agents of the state were to regularly participate in the Program. Each state organ had its own “committee” that was responsible for organizing their respective ministry or department into manageable “cells,” ensuring that regular study sessions were conducted by these cells, and that discussions in these sessions conformed to language and ideological content mandated by the Information Ministry. Prior to each scheduled week or month of study, the Information Ministry would disseminate “study materials” to each ministry or department with a deadline for when completion of study is expected, and these materials, in turn, are then disseminated to the respective civil servants of each organ. For the most part, the Information Ministry left scheduling to the discretion of the respective committees, as long as reading and discussion of the text were completed by the deadline. Entering each study session, participants were expected to have completed their assigned readings and had taken notes on questions and issues that they had uncovered. Each study session, regardless of organ, followed a standardized format by which a “presider” would introduce the topic of discussion, “presenters” would deliver scripted talks on the reading for the week, and participating members would then collectively discuss the topic at hand. Following each study session, the assigned secretaries were expected to deliver drafted reports on the date and time of each session, what content was discussed, and note who spoke and what was spoken

in the discussions that followed. These drafted reports were sent upward to the ministry-level, which collated the reports from all study sessions and delivered these reports to the Information Ministry. The Information Ministry would then deliver to each state organ its own appraisal of the PSP activities in each state organ, noting deficits, room for improvement, or praise of the efforts.

The tightly monitored and systematic operations of the Program allowed the Republican state to ensure not only that similar messages were conveyed across the administration, but also that discussions in each session conformed to the state's ideological impetus. Presiders and presenters—effectively the leadership in each study session—were expected to properly answer any questions posed by participants, ensure that discussions were orderly and remained on topic, and rectify ideologically-incorrect statements. Rewards, recognition, and accolades were given to leaders who operated their sessions properly and efficiently, while those organs which did not meet expectations received warning and reprimand. As the program expanded, it became seen as an integral component to the success of any major state initiative, including well-known counterinsurgency efforts like the Strategic Hamlet, Open Arms, and the Phoenix Program. The systematic, regular nature by which ideological and political messages were conveyed through the PSP made the Program an essential platform for actualizing cross-ministerial cooperation on these major projects. As the practice of political study moved from the organs to state into the mobilizing campaigns that entailed mass participation, state messaging and surveillance activities reached into the broader Republican society. By the end of the Republic in 1975, political study sessions had been conducted in rural hamlets, amongst state-sponsored militia groups, within worker's and trade unions, and other civil societal organizations. Indeed, even those organizations with weaker ties to the Republican state—like political parties and politico-religious organizations—had appropriated the political study format to conduct ideologically-independent “study sessions.”

In this dissertation, the examination of the PSP speaks to the broader aims of the Republican state to construct an anticommunist citizenry. As agents of the state, civil servants and soldiers are expected to be the moral and ideological “vanguard” of the national project, willingly and enthusiastically participating in state programs and initiatives. Perceived as the state's representatives, administrative and military personnel engaged in ideological training that was purposefully designed to cultivate an army of state “cadres” who could “lead the masses” in the social transformation of the nation. Through the PSP, Republican state-builders believed they could transform ordinary bureaucrats into compliant, ideologically versed, and politicized agents of the state. As the model to produce “cadres” was eventually expanded to construct the Republican citizen, the PSP is central for understanding the broader ideological work of the Republican state and the South Vietnamese nationalizing project.

As a program explicitly designed to inculcate the values of the Republican state, the PSP stands as a quintessential case for exploring the process through which an anticommunist “subject” is produced. Aligned with the Republican quest for “spiritual” transformation of the Vietnamese people, the operations of the PSP is Foucault's “subjectification” in applied policy. The belief of the Program was that through regular, standardized, and compulsory engagement with ideological texts, state agents and civilians would become internalized beliefs that would enable them to act as contributors to the national project. Participants are expected to internalize values, concepts, and categories. In this process of state-mandated ideological pedagogy, participants acquire knowledge, comprehension, and familiarity of Republican anticommunist

“truth” discourse. Over the course of Republican history, state ideas are transformed into taken-for-granted forms of knowledge, informing citizens of anticommunist terminologies,<sup>143</sup> politico-moral concepts,<sup>144</sup> notions of belonging,<sup>145</sup> and the specificity of what “people of the nation” *người Quốc Gia* should stand for and what they should stand against. These categories and concepts constitute the anticommunist notion of self, generating a perceived moral-political universe which guided the activities of Republican actors, interpreted state policies and events, and justified the existence of a nation devoted to the anticommunist cause.

The PSP, thus, lay at the core of nation-building and state-formation in South Vietnam. On the one hand, the PSP was seen as an essential tool through which civil servants, soldiers, and the citizenry could acquire “moral” and “civic” education, including an understanding of liberal democracy, elections, and rights and duties of citizens. In this sense, the PSP served as a mechanism through which a new sense of belonging, responsibilities, and identities were forged. Republican state-builders sought to rid the South Vietnamese society of certain “traditional” and “feudalistic” mentalities deemed antagonistic to the goals of national development and progress. Orchestrators of the Program sought to “strengthen” the national body by changing the mindset that ostensibly once allowed Vietnam to be colonized, purifying the national body of social and political ills, and raise the “civic aptitude” *dân trí* of citizens so they could better participate in the nationalizing project. On the other hand, the PSP was a crucial component for combating communism in Vietnam. Believing they were at war against a conniving, clandestine communist force, Republican state-builders viewed political study as a tool through which cadres and citizens could acquire the “spiritual weapon” necessary to combat the deception of the enemy. For Republican state-builders, it was necessary to transform citizens into vigilant and ever-ready combatants who could detect and fight against communism wherever and whenever it arises. To achieve this, routine ideological reinforcement was not only desirable for the anticommunist war; it was a mandatory requirement for the survival of the nation.

Studying the PSP provides insight into how Republican anticommunism was “consolidated” in South Vietnam. As will be elaborated in Chapter 3, the PSP operated within the state’s “propaganda network.” This “network” entailed broad and systematic inter-ministerial collaboration to deliver ideological consistent and rhetorically standardized content throughout not only the administration, but also to the wider public. Indeed, for much of the Republican era, the Information Ministry was at the center of this effort. On the one hand, the Information Ministry was central to encouraging the production of anticommunist texts, broadcast, literature, arts and the like. On the other hand, the organ served a monitoring and censorship function, limiting the types of content that would be disseminated to the society writ large.<sup>146</sup> While the “study materials” produced by the Information Ministry were far more complex than the slogans

<sup>143</sup> E.g., *Việt Cộng* [Vietnamese Communists], *cộng sản nằm vùng* [communist sleeper agents], *thân cộng* [communist sympathizers].

<sup>144</sup> E.g., *đứt khoát tư tưởng* [thought resoluteness], *lập trường* [ideological standpoint], *chính nghĩa quốc gia* [nationalist righteousness].

<sup>145</sup> E.g., *cộng đồng phát triển* [communal progress], *cộng đồng tự nhiên* [natural community], *tương thân tương ái* [mutual cooperation], *đồng bào* [compatriots].

<sup>146</sup> As Tran notes, there is little evidence that the Republican state forced writers and cultural producers to develop anticommunist content and state efforts did not coerce the populace into accepting anticommunism. However, the activities of the Ministry did establish the boundaries of what kind of information was legally and politically acceptable. In this sense, censorship and state encouragement allowed Republican anticommunism to proliferate beyond the governmental realm and into the popular culture of the Republican society.

and texts made available to the wider public, the ideological messages conveyed through the PSP, nevertheless, can serve as an empirical proxy for examining the ideological content made available to the society writ large. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in later chapters, messages conveyed through newspapers, textbooks, radio broadcasts, and other forms of mass media were ideologically consistent with the discussions and texts produced for the Program.

Because the PSP was central to various state programs, it, moreover, serves as a key channel for mass mobilization and penetration of Republican anticommunism in the wider society. Counter-insurgency initiatives like the Strategic Hamlet, the Open Arms, and the Phoenix Program were not confined solely to the Republican state. Rather, each of these initiatives required participation from a broad swath of the population, whether in the form of constructing fortified villages or delivering intelligence on suspected communist activities. As such, the realization of these programs requires that regular citizens not only be appraised of goals, protocols, and intent of these state initiatives, but also actively cooperate and participate in these state projects. The PSP, in these cases, provided the organizational structure through which ideological content could be effectively flow to the Republican citizenry for the cultivation of popular support. This was precisely the case during key mobilizing efforts like Communist Denunciation Campaign under Diêm, or the mass “study” of the Paris Peace Accords under Thiệu. During these campaigns, teams of cadres were sent to hamlets, villages, and wards to host rallies and orchestrate demonstrations in support of the state’s policies. Central to these cadre’s work was organizing mass study sessions through which state messages—even if distilled and sloganized—were conveyed to ordinary citizens. By participating in these study sessions and engaging in campaign activities, the PSP, and the state projects within which it operated, provide the mechanism for the “consolidation” of anticommunism across the Republican era.

The PSP was a core component for the construction of an anticommunist citizenry in South Vietnam. However, in line with what is consistently argued in this introduction, the effects of the Program did not end at the “subjectivity” of Republican actors. The narratives, terminologies, and concepts disseminated through the Program had lasting legacies upon the Vietnamese exile communities. Although their nation has ceased from existence, Vietnamese refugees drew upon the familiar anticommunist concepts, terminologies, and narratives of the Republic to construct and form their communities abroad. In this sense, the anticommunist “subjectivities” formed during the Republican era migrated along with Vietnamese bodies to the shores of Western nations. The effects of Republican anticommunist “consolidation,” although occurring during the Republican era, would persist long after that era has ended. This fact compels the redirection of the study of Vietnamese Americans as not only products of migration and exile, but also as enduring citizen-subjects of the Vietnamese Republican nation-state. In this regard, examination of the PSP is important for understanding not only citizenship and identity in Republican Vietnam but also in Vietnamese America.

### *Republican Anticommunism as Discourse*

As an ideological discourse, Republican anticommunism was modified and adapted throughout the course of Republican history. While the operations of the PSP can shed light upon the citizen-formation process under the Republic, examination of the ideological text utilized in the Program can illuminate the adaptability of the narratives, terminologies, and political concepts originating from the Republican state. The ideological content taught through PSP changed with the ebbs and flow of politics across Republican history. Different administrations,

new leaderships, and unfolding developments pertaining to South Vietnam and the wider context of the Cold War were necessarily integrated with what was read and discussed in the PSP. As such, historically tracing the transformation of ideas and narratives developed at the point of the Program's inauguration to their later usage can provide valuable insights into the effects of politics upon discourse and the dynamism of Republican anticommunism as an ideology.

Brown and Yule define discourse as "language in use."<sup>147</sup> The notion of "use" is core to understanding the emergence, dissemination, and proliferation of anticommunist narratives, terminologies, and concepts across the Republican era. In this dissertation, I conceptualize discourse as a social practice involving the deployment of organized modes of communication within observable historical, cultural and social contexts. To study discourse, scholars must turn to the analyzable texts and conversations that actors produce through engagement with discourse. As constitutive elements of discourse, texts and conversations provide the empirical avenues through which scholars examine "what the speaker or writer is doing through discourse, and how this 'doing' is linked to wider interpersonal, institutional, socio-cultural and material contexts."<sup>148</sup>

Discourse is necessarily open to change, modification, and rectification. These changes can come through the emergence of alternative and contesting cultural expressions, changes to political coalition, or modification of existing narratives to be more inclusive or appeal to subordinate demands. Change can also come through repeated use in changing historical contexts. Such a change can be gradual and accumulative, shifting what is legitimately discussed and how things are discussed through reinterpretation and reuse. New narratives can be "layered" upon existing ones, and new events and historical developments are incorporated into the existing discourse changing it incrementally.<sup>149</sup> Overtime, interpretations and narratives originally utilized to explain an earlier event can be redeployed to make sense of ones that more recently occurred.<sup>150</sup> The reconfiguration of existing narratives to new development can shift what is emphasized in a discourse and can open room for alternative interpretations. Such gradual change can be contrasted to more sudden ones, like during crises, accidents, or challenges to existing forms of legitimacy. In these cases, new texts that "leave traces" can force actors to immediately reinterpret their existing social reality, opening the door for radical change.<sup>151</sup> Such new "sensemaking" is necessitated in moments of "accidents and crises" as

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<sup>147</sup> Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>148</sup> John Richardson, *Analyzing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 24.

<sup>149</sup> The idea of "layered" is appropriated from theories of gradual change in the historical institutionalism literature to explain changes in discourses and narratives. "Layering," here, is conceived as characterizing how institutions and narratives may have "inconsistent or competing objectives" that are accrued over the passage of time. This historical process can occur through "institutional conversion," or the adaption of "existing institutions for new or alternative purposes" (Kellee Tsai, "Adaptive Informal Institutions and Endogenous Institutional Change in China," *World Politics*, 59:1[2006], 116-141). See also, Edward Anthony Koning, "The three institutionalisms and institutional dynamics: understanding endogenous and exogenous change," *Journal of Public Policy*, 36:4(2016), 639-664;

<sup>150</sup> Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What is Agency?" 103:4(1998), 962-1023; Nelson Philips, Thomas Lawrence and Cynthia Hardy, "Discourse and Institutions," *The Academy of Management Review*, 39(4):2004, 635-652.

<sup>151</sup> Nelson Philips, Thomas Lawrence and Cynthia Hardy, "Discourse and Institutions," *The Academy of Management Review*, 39(4):2004, 635-652.

actors must retrospectively seek to make sense of what has happened and why it happened. Through this process of reinterpretation, new texts and conversations are produced, providing new explanations and new accounts to allow actors to make sense of their past and plan for the future.<sup>152</sup>

As a discourse, Republican anticommunism provides the interpretative context through which human actors in South Vietnam make sense of their often-turbulent reality and engage with their social world. Republican anticommunist discourse governs what South Vietnamese actors can imagine, what they do, and the representational ways in which they engage others and society. If discourse acquires its importance through the performative power of language, Republican anticommunism not only informs South Vietnamese actors of norms, rules, and beliefs of their social world, it has the ability to “bring into being the very realities it claims to describe.”<sup>153</sup> It “rules in” certain ideational constructs (such as the valuation of the Republican state, the necessity of combating communism, the goals of economic prosperity and national development, etc.) and “rules out” by limiting can be legitimately acknowledged and discussed in political conversations (such as communist ideology, the legitimacy of the North Vietnamese government, etc.).<sup>154</sup> Imbued with performative powers, Republican anticommunism did not exist just as an abstraction; it was a guiding framework for action that humans sought to actualize in South Vietnam. Indeed, the goal of constructing an anticommunist nation state was purposefully and actively sought by the Republican state and citizenry. Republican anticommunism defined the political activities of social actors who, through continuous engagement with its ideational features, brought that discourse into reality.

As a mode of communication, discourse allows social actors to disseminate and transmit ideas, and the invocation of these ideas perpetuate and sustain the discourse. Discourse must necessarily be taught or relayed, and it is only through engagement by actors that the discourse persists. In this sense, Republican anticommunism would not have survived without its continued relevance to the activities of social actors in South Vietnam. Through the PSP, this relevance was imposed and engagement with Republican anticommunism was an expected component of political study. As the PSP became institutionalized practice within the Republican state, so too is the discourse with which its participants engaged. The perpetuation of political study as a practice, thus, became the mechanism for the perpetuation of the narratives, terminologies, and concepts taught and disseminated through that practice. The routinization of political study (and other forms of ideological work), in turn, routinized engagement with Republican anticommunism. This routine allowed Republican anticommunism to become a normalized discourse, governing the ideas, activities, and imagination of state agents and the Republican society at large.

Examination of the texts taught in the PSP, thus, allows this dissertation to map out the core narratives and concepts that constitute Republican anticommunism as a discourse. These texts are systematically and regularly taught through the PSP and lay the groundwork for building an understanding of the significance, meaning, and context behind events,

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid; Karl Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (Sage, 1995); Andrew Brown, “Making sense of inquiry sensemaking,” *Journal of Management Studies*, 37:2000, 45-75.

<sup>153</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*, (Routledge, 2003), 203-4.

<sup>154</sup> For “rules in” and “rules out,” see Stuart Hall, “Foucault: Power, Knowledge and discourse,” in Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon Yates, (eds), *Discourse theory and practice: A reader*, (Sage, 2001), 72-81.

terminologies, and depictions. Furthermore, because the PSP was so durable across Republican history, examination of these texts overtime will lend insight into how narratives change, evolve, and remain consistent. It shed light on how narratives developed at one moment in time are redeployed by actors at a later moment, how references and interpretations change, and what aspects of the original conception became obsolete or removed as a result of changing political conditions and imperatives. Moreover, examination of the texts taught within the state provides a baseline for comparison with political discussions and debates within the broader Republican society. In doing so, this dissertation seeks to parse out which state-derived ideas and narratives were reappropriated by non-state actors and which ideational aspects were not. Through examination of discursive, textual content utilized the PSP, this dissertation seeks to establish what was ideologically disseminated by the Republican state, what ideas actually “penetrated” South Vietnamese society, and which ideas traveled and repurposed under the context of Vietnamese America.

### *Republican Anticommunism and Vietnamese American Memory*

In the post-1975 moment, what was most evidently transposed from South Vietnam to the Vietnamese refugee communities abroad was this “discourse” of Republican anticommunism. As an ideological “language” that was prevalent, familiar, and hegemonic in South Vietnam—surviving despite the turmoil of the era by virtue of its continued political relevance—it would be ludicrous to expect Republican anticommunism to somehow disappear as Vietnamese refugees entered the United States.<sup>155</sup> Rather, republican anticommunism significantly shaped how Vietnamese Americans engage with memory and their collective past. Those Vietnamese American narrations of loss, pain, and trauma that are often linked to displacement and flight following the Fall of Saigon was not something entirely novel and new. It is superficial to take these narratives at face value as deriving from “real” lived experiences, and inadequate to understand these narratives as a product of the refugee’s need to conform to portrayal of America rescue and paternalism, or simply something that shores up American imperialism and legitimacy. Rather, these narrations must be understood as an *extension of the existing discourse* that informed South Vietnamese “meaning making” across the Republican era.<sup>156</sup> Just as the South Vietnamese modified Republican anticommunism to speak to unfolding developments and events during the war era, that same discourse continued to be shaped and reshaped to interpret events in Vietnamese America.

Maurice Halbwachs understood memory as not individual and private, but rather social, collective, and shared. Past events are not recalled as perfect images of what had transpired, but rather the past is interpreted through existing collective frameworks and present concerns. That is, memory is relevant insofar that it can be interpersonally communicated and expressed, and,

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<sup>155</sup> As Caplan et al., argues in their study of Indochinese American “achievement,” the success of the Indochinese refugees was partially due to the fact that “They do not ruminate or rail against the events of their past.” Ironically, the publication of their work followed the height of the “Homeland Restoration” movement, during which Vietnamese exiles sought to send cadres back to Indochina to engage in guerrilla war in hopes of overthrowing the communist regime in Vietnam.

<sup>156</sup> Michelle Lamont, “Meaning-Making in Cultural Sociology: Broadening Our Agenda,” *Contemporary Sociology*, 39(4):2000, 602-607; see also, Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review*, 51(2):1986, 273-286.

thus, hold social significance and value.<sup>157</sup> Portrayals of past events are filtered through discourses, narratives, and assumptions that are collectively held by those who are engaging in remembrance. Memory, furthermore, is not a neutral recollection. Which events are commemorated, how they are commemorated, and who gets to be remembered are, in large part, consequences of political and power struggles. As such, the examination of memory requires an understanding of the collective discourse that actors draw upon to frame happenings in the past, while simultaneously situating these memory engagements in the politics of the present.<sup>158</sup> The latter, more or less, has been comprehensively addressed in recent scholarship on Vietnamese Americans. The former, however, is a stark omission that results largely from the scholarship's inability to historically engage with how anticommunism had existed as a "consolidated," political discourse in South Vietnam.

Eric Hobsbawm points to the importance of imposed routines and rituals in the practice of collective commemoration. His essay on "invented traditions" points to how engagement with the imagined past is "normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules...which seek to inculcate certain values and norms and behavior by repetition."<sup>159</sup> These rules, thus, structures how people engage with the past by establishing boundaries upon who and which events are remembered, and how they are to be remembered. Far from something natural or automatic, these "rules" must have, at some point in time, been created, institutionalized, and formalized. Hobsbawm points to nation-state in the examination of how traditions are invented in Europe. As the "largest stage on which the crucial activities determining human lives...played out," the state provided a "framework" for human activities and collective action.<sup>160</sup> Through policies, laws, and "state education," people were made into citizens with tacit familiarity with how to interpret the symbols representing the nation ("capitals, flags, national anthems, military uniforms" and the like).<sup>161</sup> In the construction of a national tradition, Hobsbawm points to creation of a secular "clergy," the development of new public ceremonies and rites, and the "mass production of public monuments." Each of these elements are crucial for the national practice of commemoration, building a linkage between an imagined past and the political present. They serve to link citizens to nation, and, in doing so, naturalizes symbols, narratives, and images that were at one point novel "inventions."<sup>162</sup>

In the same way, we must understand that how Vietnamese Americans engage with their past relies on rituals, symbols, and narratives that had, at some point in time, been institutionalized and formalized. That process is located in the "nationalizing" process in South Vietnam. Although physically removed from Republican nation-state as a consequence of how the war in Vietnam was resolved, the tacit knowledge of commemoration was not erased. Rather, it took new forms and was modified to speak to the contemporary issue of the present—or had

<sup>157</sup> Maurice Halbwachs [Lewis Coser, ed. tr.], *On Collective Memory*, (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37-40

<sup>158</sup> Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy (eds), "Introduction" in *The Collective Memory Reader*, (Oxford University Press, 2011), 13-22; Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memroies: The Vietnam War, the Aids Pandemic, and the Politics of Remembering*, (University of California Press, 1997); Sanford Levinson, *Written in Stone: Public Monuments in Changing Societies*, (Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>159</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition*, (Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

<sup>160</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 264.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 264-266

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 263-305.



undergone a process of “adaptation” to reference Hobsbawm.<sup>163</sup> The South Vietnamese flag, for example, has transmogrified from a symbol representing the ideal of an anticommunist Vietnamese nation into one that represents Vietnamese American “Freedom and Heritage.” The South Vietnamese national anthem is now sung following the “Star-Spangled Banner” during Vietnamese American celebrations and events, symbolizing the Vietnamese’s belonging in America’s national fold. And similarly, anticommunist depictions and interpretations that once framed the “origin story” of the war in Vietnam were reappropriated to narrate Vietnamese refugee journeys and trials, providing an answer to “why” the Vietnamese were in the United States.

In this dissertation, a key focus will be the transformation of Republican anticommunism as political discourse—that is the narratives, terminologies, and interpretations found in political texts and discussions. Here, as noted in the previous section, the PSP will play an essential role in establishing the “baseline” content that constitutes Republican anticommunism. Such an examination, furthermore, will allow this dissertation to demonstrate how Republican anticommunism has transformed and evolved throughout Republican history. The discussion on anticommunist discourse in Vietnamese America will be framed as an extension of the discursive evolution of this ideology. As will be demonstrated, Republican anticommunism greatly shapes the ways in which Vietnamese Americans articulate and narrate their past. Rather than something that arises from their experiences as refugees or as victims of communism, oral histories, memoirs, and other commemorative texts of Vietnamese Americans rely upon familiar depictions, terminologies, and narratives that had been long “consolidated” in South Vietnamese history.

To take a lesson from Barry Schwartz’s examination of the memory of Abraham Lincoln, past forms of commemoration bear itself upon and influence the commemorative activities of the present. The “reputational entrepreneur” may engage with the changes in politics and conditions of the present, but they must necessarily draw upon what existed prior to create meaning, representations, and interpretations that are seen as legitimate. As Schwartz makes explicit, “Lincoln highlighted the continuity of past and present because his identity had changed enough to accommodate new concerns and preoccupations but not enough to negate what it previously represented.”<sup>164</sup> The reproduction of past discursive forms will not be a perfect replica, as Hobsbawm indicated.<sup>165</sup> However, this does not invalidate the importance of those forms. Rather, the past provides a political grounding that legitimizes new or modified ways to utilize anticommunism. Here, both the institutionalized past and the politics of the present matters in understanding the anticommunism in Vietnamese America today.

### *Chapters Outlines*

The chapters of this dissertation are divided into four parts, encompassing a total of ten chapters. These chapters will rely heavily upon the PSP to piece together a political history of the Republic of Vietnam and Republican anticommunism. It will dissect how historical developments shape the existing Republican anticommunist discourse, and how that discourse

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<sup>163</sup> Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” 7-9.

<sup>164</sup> Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12, 301.

<sup>165</sup> Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” 1-14.

aid historical actors interpret, define, and mobilize around key developments in Republican history. Part I provides historical background to the PSP (Chapter 1 and 2), Part II examines the transformation of three core narratives taught through the PSP across Republican history (Chapter 3, 4, and 5), and Part III interrogates the discursive impact of narratives within the broader Republican society (Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9). Part IV examines the legacies of Republican anticommunism in Vietnamese America (Chapter 10 and Conclusion).

To sketch the empirical foundations of this dissertation, Chapter 1 documents the institutional history of the PSP across the Republican era. The chapter locates the origins of political study as a practice in the political activities of the Cần Lao Party and its Personalist philosophy of totalistic change. It articulates how the practice was conceived by the orchestrators of the Program, examines the organization of the program, and details the various administrative changes to leadership across Republican history. The chapter locates the institutional history of the PSP within the broader political history of the Republic, documenting how the Program transformed in form and function under the First Republic, the Interregnum, and the Second Republic. It highlights the historical agency of Republican state-builders and illustrates how enactment of the Program lay squarely within the modernist “postcolonial vision” of the Republic.

Chapter 2 focuses on the institutional embeddedness of the PSP within the Republican state’s broader agenda to cultivate an anticommunist citizenry and combat communism. It conceptualizes the practice of political study as a “pedagogical” technique of the Republican state, deployed to not only inculcate state values and discourse, but also as a disciplinary mechanism for social control. Embeddedness of the PSP is, firstly, examined as a process of institutionalization, emphasizing endogenous changes to the program, adaptability of the practice to new functions, and the deliberate efforts of orchestrators of the Program to sustain and rectify the practice to ensure its survival. Second, the chapter examines embeddedness through how the Program is situated within the broader “propaganda network” of the Republic. As the chapter demonstrates, the PSP was central to virtually every major state project, acquiring roles in broader state messaging programs (such as “Civic Education”) as well as coercive strategies (such as the Phoenix Program).

The subsequent three chapters examine three specific narratives that are core to Republican anticommunism: the Geneva Narrative (Chapter 3), Anti-Neutrality (Chapter 4), and Vietnamese Underdevelopment (Chapter 5). These three narratives were systematically taught throughout the duration of the PSP, transforming and modified in accordance to new state objectives and the changing political conditions of the Republican era. The institutionalization of the PSP did not simply embed political study as a routinized state practice, it also institutionalized narratives, terminologies, and beliefs that gave meaning to activities of the Republican state and their agents.

Part II of the dissertation empirically demonstrates how specific narratives in the Republican anticommunist discourse were retained across the tumultuous history of the Republic. If the practice of political study was adapted to changes in administration, state programs, and objectives, these narratives that grounded the anticommunist national project were adapted alongside it. New orchestrators of the PSP did not simply draw upon prior forms and structures of the Program, they also drew upon existing ideological agendas and discursive texts previously taught by prior regimes. The adaptability of these narratives helps explain their persistence across time, utilized—if at times awkwardly—to justify new state policies,

rhetorically combat new forms of dissent, and, all the while, maintain the legitimacy of the anticommunist project in South Vietnam.

The persistence of specific ideological contents in state messaging aids in explaining how Republican anticommunism became prevalent and hegemonic during the Republican era. Because the same narratives, terminologies, and concepts were deployed time and time again (though rectified and expanded to integrate new developments and to cope with changing circumstances), these ideas become familiar and enter the working knowledge of political actors in South Vietnam. The utilization and reutilization of the similar narratives, terminologies, and concepts allow the “lessons” taught in one period of the Republic to apply to developments temporally removed from the events that originally inspired them. Given the strictures of the PSP, the internalization of these “lessons” was mandatory for state agents. The repetition of these ideas over the course of 20 odd years transformed what was originally novel state narratives into taken-for-granted truths that became habitually utilized to interpret new events, cope with new challenges, and address new historical developments.

The three narratives, furthermore, articulate dimensions of politics unique to the South Vietnamese experience during the Cold War. The first narrative—that of the Geneva Accords—tells of the political origins of the Republic and its anticommunist ideals. It narrates the reason for the state and points to the necessity of an anticommunist nation in South Vietnam. While justifying the First Republic’s opposition to the Geneva signings and the North’s call for reunification procedures, the narrative evolved under the Second Republic to legitimize the Thiệu administration’s position regarding negotiations and the question of peace. In the lead up to and following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords, the narrative was redeployed to cast doubt on the intentions of the communists and justify the regime’s policies of continued militarization, martial law, anticommunist vigilance.

The second narrative emerged out of the First Republic’s reaction to the emergence and growth of the Non-Alignment Movement that would influence many nations of the Third World. Contesting the “middle-of-the-road” position that “neutralists” purportedly took, the narrative emphasizes the adamancy required for success against communism, warned against communist propaganda and duplicity, and sought to provide its state agents and citizenry the necessary psychological “weapons” to safeguard against the influences of the communist foe. Under the subsequent regimes, the narrative was deployed to combat the emergence of peace movements, the “Third Force,” and calls for “coalition government.” Through this narrative, demands for communist-inspired peace are naught but a seductive deception to “neutralize” South Vietnam and “open the road” for eventual communist takeover.

The last narrative articulates the Republican modernist vision and the proper responses to the unique postcolonial challenges of “underdevelopment, communism, and disunity” facing South Vietnam. The narrative of Vietnamese Underdevelopment outlines these challenges in detail and articulates a Personalist “path” towards development—one purportedly uniquely catered the “realities” facing the Republic. While Personalism would not be retained as a guiding philosophy for modernization following the collapse of the First Republic, elements focusing on the unique challenges of underdevelopment, communism, and war were retained, and aspects of communalism and “spiritual” transformation—concepts core to Personalist philosophy—were revived in PSP texts of subsequent regimes.

Having established the institutionalization and perpetuation of both the practice of political study and the three core narratives taught through the Program, Part III moves to discuss

the “consolidation” of these state-originated narratives in the broader society. Chapter 6-9 zeroes-in on the “chaotic” Interregnum Period of the Republican era. An episode little explored in the contemporary Vietnam War scholarship, the Interregnum was a defining moment in Republican history, characterized by power struggles between competing groups over the definition of Republican anticommunism and the direction of the country.

Part III highlights the prevalence of Republican anticommunism with the broader Republican society and demonstrates the ability of this discourse to persist despite the collapse of the state that gave birth to it. Chapter 6 begins with a brief historical timeline and outlines a framework for understanding discursive continuity and change. Chapters 7-9 are historical in nature, broken down chronologically. Chapter 7 addresses the “First Period of Military rule” from November 1963-August 1964. Chapter 8 covers the period from September 1964-June 1965, or the “Period of Civil Rule.” Chapter 9 relays the return to military rule, beginning with the establishment of the Directorate in June 1965 to the formation of the Second Republic in 1967.

Focusing on the political discourse generated within the “Republican civil society,” the three empirical chapters demonstrates how Republican anticommunism moved from being a “state ideology” to a “cultural script” widely held by citizens of the Republic. As such, Republican anticommunism also informed “alternative national narratives” championed by the “opposition” *đổi lập* which opposed, pressured, and lobbied the various regimes that arose during the era to make substantial changes to the South Vietnamese political system and the Republic’s conduct of war. While the political conversation during the Interregnum moved significantly to issues of democratic reforms, anti-authoritarianism, and social justice, these conversations were, nevertheless, situated within ingrained Republican anticommunist narratives. “Old” narratives blended with “new” ones as an arising Republican civil society deployed both set of ideas to challenge the state and joust for political legitimation and control over the direction of the “Revolution.” Indeed, while the First Republic had fallen (and was greatly demonized during the period), the anticommunist narratives it had established lived on and were reutilized by different (at times antagonistic) historical actors for diverse political aims. As such, Republican anticommunism was “consolidated” through its regular and fervent usage by civil, religious and political groups to support, contest, and denounce regimes in power. While oppositional forces were, in large part, politically defeated by the start of the Second Republic, their messages and ideas around Republican anticommunism remained. Indeed, if the Second Republic was far more democratic and progressive than the First, it was because of the massive non-state mobilizing activities that had manifested during the Interregnum.

Part IV examines the legacies of Republican anticommunism in Vietnamese America. Chapter 10 builds on the arguments made in the previous chapter to explore how the Geneva Narrative, Anti-Neutrality, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment informed community formation in the post-1975 era. While these narratives were no longer formalized or supported by a de facto state, elements of the stories they told continued to pervade and inform the assumptions and beliefs of Vietnamese refugees who fled overseas. As will be demonstrated, in the redeployment of Republican anticommunism, Vietnamese Americans drew on familiar anticommunist terminologies, caricatures, assumptions, and interpretations to mobilize around issues of “Human Rights,” support movements seeking to “Restore the Nation,” justify attacks against political dissidents, and the assert themselves ethnically and culturally as the “true” representatives of the Vietnamese people. These early political movements laid the foundation for the Vietnamese

exile's community formation overseas, and reconstituted Republican anticommunism within the politics of the budding Vietnamese American community.

The final chapter concludes with brief reflections on the future direction of Vietnamese America and the legacy of anticommunism. It focuses on growing political and generational divisions within the community and the effects of these divisions in contemporary American politics. Particularly, it provisionally explores the progressivism of Vietnamese American youths and their relationship to the anticommunism in the community. The chapter proposes a constructive, but informed, path forward upon which the legacy of Republican anticommunism is not rejected or demonized, but rather confronted as a defining aspect of Vietnamese American identity.

PART I: POLITICAL STUDY AND THE VIETNAMESE REPUBLIC

## CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND HISTORY OF POLITICAL STUDY

“Các cấp lãnh đạo chỉ huy phải quan niệm cho đúng tầm quan trọng của vấn đề học tập. Phải ý thức rằng: ‘Học tập là một quốc sách/*The leadership must correctly appraise the importance of [political] study. They must realize: ‘Political study is a national policy’*”—Ngô Đình Nhu, 1959.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Vấn Đề Học Tập: Lược thuật buổi nói chuyện của O. Cố Vấn Chánh Trị ngày 10-12-1959,” Folder No. 20358, *Tài liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v “Nhận xét về âm mưu sửa đổi hiến pháp của Việt Cộng” nam 1960*. PTTĐICH, TTLTQGII.

On October 20<sup>th</sup>, 1960, when Trần Chánh Thành ended his 5-year tenure as the Minister of Information, he left behind a legacy that not many other South Vietnamese could ever hope to match. During those five years, he had aided the formation of the first Vietnamese Republic, waged a three-year campaign that laid the fundamentals of what would become South Vietnamese anticommunism, and, perhaps most importantly, inaugurated a program of state indoctrination that would survive long after his President has been killed. While the history of the Vietnamese Republic was indeed a tumultuous one, filled with regime changes, coups, social protest, and insurgent warfare, the PSP provided a consistency of engaged practice and state-disseminated ideas revolving around themes of anticommunism, nationalism, and citizen engagement in goals of national progress and development. Those who would assume the duties once held by Trần Chánh Thành as head of the Information Ministry would rely on the structure and organization established during those early days of the First Republic. Men like Định Chính Trình (Minister of Psychological Warfare under the Premiership of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ), Nguyễn Ngọc An (Minister of Information under the Premiership of Trần Văn Hương), and Ngô Khắc Tĩnh (Minister of Information under the Premiership of Trần Thiện Khiêm) would rely on both the goals and format of the PSP laid out during the early days of the Communist Denunciation Campaign.

During the First Republic, the innocuously labeled “Political Study Program” was a central but by no means the sole mechanism for state propaganda and indoctrination. Newspapers, academic journals, books, and radio broadcasts were replete with messages expounding ideas of Personalism, anticommunism, development, and democracy. State-directed mass conferences and gatherings of government employees, soldiers, and civilians often entailed presentations of state-messages and collective discussions to follow. Indeed, rather than an exclusive mechanism of state-indoctrination, the PSP is best understood as part of what Joiner and Jumper call “the regime’s propaganda network.” This “network” entailed not only avenues through which state messages are articulated and disseminated, it also includes state-directed, though non-governmental socio-political organs. Included were the National Revolutionary Movement, the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants, and the Republican Youths. These various organs were often directed by members of the Ngô family or their trusted agents, and membership to one often meant membership to another.<sup>2</sup> The importance of the PSP, thus, laid not in its exclusivity, but its ability to shed insight on the systematic operations of this “propaganda network.” Indeed, the ideas discussed, documents read, and presentations given in the PSP often reflects those of these other propagandistic organs.

While subsequent regimes did not possess nearly the level of discursive control seen under the administration of Ngô Đình Diệm, reiterations of the PSP during subsequent eras continued to be a means through which the Republican state disseminated, framed and interpreted core topics of political importance. Matters covered in the PSP after the First Republic reflected political issues debated in popular journals, newspapers, and other public mediums and study materials presented the state’s position on transformative events such as the “Struggle Movement” in 1966, the elections of 1967, the Paris Peace talks beginning in 1968, and the Paris Peace Accords in 1973. If state messages faced increased resistance following the First Republic, the PSP was an essential tool through which subsequent regimes sought to

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<sup>2</sup> Joiner, Charles A. and Roy Jumper, “Organizing Bureaucrats: South Viet Nam’s National Revolutionary Civil Servant’s League,” *Asian Survey* 3(4), 1963: 203-215.



maintain ideological unity within its administrative rank. Beyond timely coverage of developing events, subsequent reiterations of the PSP, as with the First Republic, disseminated the ideals of the Republican state in hopes of constructing politically active, mobilized, and ideologically versed civil servants and soldiers.

Below, this chapter will examine the conceptualization and history of the PSP. The chapter will first explore how the PSP was conceived by its orchestrators. It will dwell into the origins and inspiration behind the program by linking political study practices and goals to the aspirations of the Cần Lao Personalist Party (*Đảng Cần Lao Nhân Vị*, CLP), led by the Ngô brothers. The chapter then chronologically documents the institutional history of the PSP. The chapter is meant to establish the historical foundations upon which this dissertation will explore mechanisms through which political study as practice was maintained and perpetuated (Chapter 2) and discursive continuity of the PSP (Part II). By documenting how anticommunist ideas and practices were maintained within the Republican administration, the dissertation will segue into how these ideas survived beyond the confines of the Republican state (Part III) and its legacies in Vietnamese America (Part IV).

#### WHAT IS POLITICAL STUDY?

One of the few state projects that was implemented during the formation of the First Republic and actually survived to the end of the Second, “Political Study,” or *Học Tập Chính Trị* was a program of indoctrination and political-warfare that aided the crafting, dissemination, and perpetuation of Republican political discourse. Initiated as a core aspect of the Communist Denunciation Campaign (*Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng*, CDTC) in 1955, it employed a pedagogical structure, utilizing study materials *tài liệu học tập*, study sessions *buổi học tập*, and presenters *thuyết trình viên* as means to proselytize the state’s ideology. The expectation was that those attending these “classes” would “absorb” *thấm nhuần* the ideals of nationalism, anticommunism, and modernity. Indeed, it was not enough for students to simply know the materials presented, they were to integrate the lessons taught into everyday conduct; into the way they view the world, Vietnam, and their personal and leadership role in the progress and development of the Vietnamese nation.

As an essential component of the CDTC, the PSP was a mechanism of state-directed ideological engineering. At its core, the PSP was a technique of discursive dissemination through modes of indoctrination, repetition and regularization. As one 1956 guideline stated, the objective of these study sessions was “to transform ideas that have penetrated externally into thoughts that are personally derived, from the objective to the subjective, of the government into that of the people.”<sup>3</sup> Following its reconfiguration in 1958, PSP guidelines established that political study is meant to “develop [ideological] standpoint” for its citizenry, serving “National Righteousness,” and “create for the civil servants a conception of service correctly aligned with the responsibilities that the government had entrusted.”<sup>4</sup> Study sessions during the First Republic were meant to not only disseminate the political values of the Republican government, but also

<sup>3</sup> “Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 Của Giai Đoạn 1 Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc.” Folder No. 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tố Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tố cộng năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>4</sup> “Vấn Đề Học Tập,” attached to CV 86-BPTT dated 7/5/1958, in PTTĐỊCH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*.

to create an anticommunist subject-citizen who were appraised of, had internalized, and were willing to serve the ideological and political goals of their government.

Subsequent iterations of the PSP illustrate similar emphases. Under the administration of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, political study is meant to “develop thoughts, correct habits, generate a new movement of service, and, most importantly, clarity about the ideals and policies of the nation.”<sup>5</sup> Following the Tet Offensive, reconfiguration of political study under Trần Văn Hương aligned with a broader “political encouragement” *động viên chính trị* initiative meant to “develop a firm political standpoint (Nationalist)” and “foment and high anticommunist spirit” amongst the Republican administrative body, military, and citizenry.<sup>6</sup> Similar to political study under the First Republic, the goals of the Program was also intended to combat the “propagandistic allegations” of the communist enemy by raising the political aptitude *dân trí* of the Republican populace.<sup>7</sup> And under the Premiership of Trần Thiện Khiêm, the objective of political study continued to be providing state agents “a firm nationalist standpoint,” serving “mass mobilization,” and ensuring that “civil servants of the administration as well as military...completely understand” the policies and values of the Republican state, and diligently work to enact the directives of the state.<sup>8</sup>

Across the many iterations of the PSP, the organizational format of political study remained relatively consistent. The PSP was led by a central directing body that usually included the representatives from the Information Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and Office of the President or the Premier. Structural and administrative changes, at times, shifted the composition of the central directing body but primary responsibility for organizing, enacting, and oversight of political study fell upon the Ministry of Information or an administrative organ with comparable function such as the Directorate General of Information formed after 1960 during the First Republic, the Ministry of Psychological Warfare during the Premiership of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, and the Directorate General of Civic Mobilization headed by Hoàng Đức Nhã formed in 1973. A graphical summary of the various formal compositions of the central directing body over the course of Republican history is illustrated below.

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<sup>5</sup> CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*.

<sup>6</sup> CV 868/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/CT dated 3/18/1969, PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>7</sup> CV 2962/BTT/UBCĐHT/TU dated 7/31/1969, PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>8</sup> CV 2056/PThT/BĐPT/TU dated 7/6/1971, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

Formal name of Central Directing Body	Date Formalized	Composition
Central Directive Committee for the Communist Denunciation Campaign / Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Trung Ương Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng <sup>i</sup>	August 1955	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information Ministry <i>Bộ Thông Tin</i> (Chair)</li> <li>● Interior Ministry <i>Bộ Nội Vụ</i> (Vice Chair)</li> <li>● Defense Ministry <i>Bộ Quốc Phòng</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Education Ministry <i>Bộ Giáo Dục</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Office of Refugee and Migration <i>Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tỵ Nạn</i> (Member)</li> <li>● General Directorate of Police and Security <i>Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Cảnh Sát Công An</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Directorate General of the Police Union <i>Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Bảo An Đoàn</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Directorate General of Labor Union <i>Tổng Liên Đoàn Lao Động</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants <i>Liên Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia</i> (Member)</li> </ul>
Ủy Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Trung Ương / Central Directive Committee for Political Study <sup>ii</sup>	July 1958	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Minister of the Presidency <i>Bộ Trưởng Phủ Tổng Thống</i> (Chair)</li> <li>● Interior Ministry <i>Bộ Nội Vụ</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Information Ministry <i>Bộ Thông Tin</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Directorate General of Psychological Warfare <i>Nha Chiến Tranh Tâm Lý</i> (Member)</li> <li>● National Revolutionary Movement <i>Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia</i> (Member)</li> </ul>
Ủy Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Trung Ương / Central Directive Committee for Political Study <sup>iii</sup>	February 1961	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Minister of the Presidency <i>Bộ Trưởng Phủ Tổng Thống</i> (Chair)</li> <li>● Interior Ministry <i>Bộ Nội Vụ</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Ministry of Civic Commissariat <i>Bộ Công Dân Vụ</i> (Member)</li> <li>● National Education Ministry <i>Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Directorate General of Psychological Warfare of Defense Ministry <i>Nha Chiến Tranh Tâm Lý Bộ Quốc Phòng</i> (Member)</li> <li>● National Revolutionary Movement <i>Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia</i> (Member)</li> </ul>
Hội Đồng Hướng Dẫn Tài Liệu / Committee for Study Materials <sup>iv</sup>	October 1965	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● President of the National Academy of Public Administration/Rep. of Executive Commissioner Office <i>Ông Viện Trưởng Học Viện Quốc Gia Hành Chánh, đại diện Phủ Chủ tịch</i> (Chair)</li> <li>● Directorate General of Political Warfare/Rep. of Defense Ministry <i>Ông Tổng Cục Trưởng Chiến Tranh Chính Trị, đại diện Bộ Quốc Phòng</i> (Vice Chair)</li> <li>● Minister of Psychological Warfare / Information Ministry <i>Ông Đồng Lý Bộ Tâm Lý Chiến</i> (General Secretary)</li> <li>● Interior Minister <i>Ông Đồng Lý Bộ Nội Vụ</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Education Minister <i>Ông Đồng Lý Bộ Giáo Dục</i> (Member)</li> </ul>
Central Directive Committee for Political Study (Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương) <sup>v</sup>	April 1969	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information Minister <i>Tổng Trưởng Thông Tin</i> (Chair)</li> <li>● Interior Ministry <i>Bộ Nội Vụ</i> (Vice Chair)</li> <li>● Defense Ministry <i>Bộ Quốc Phòng</i> (General Secretary)</li> <li>● Ministry of Education and Youth <i>Bộ Giáo Dục và Thanh Niên</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Labor Ministry <i>Bộ Lao Động</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Ministry of Open Arms <i>Bộ Chiêu Hồi</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Ministry of Rural Development <i>Bộ Xây Dựng Nông Thôn</i> (Member)</li> </ul>
Committee for Political Mobilization (Ủy Ban Động Viên Chính Trị) <sup>vi</sup> / Central Committee for General Information (Ủy Ban Thông Tin Đại Chúng, Trung Ương) <sup>vii</sup>	October 1969, April 1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Premier <i>Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ</i> (Chair)</li> <li>● Vice Premier cum Education Ministry <i>Phó Thủ Tướng kiêm Tổng Trưởng Giáo Dục</i> (Vice Chair)</li> <li>● Information Minister <i>Tổng Trưởng Thông Tin</i> (General Secretary)</li> <li>● Defense Minister <i>Tổng Trưởng Quốc Phòng</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Minister of Rural Development <i>Tổng Trưởng Xây Dựng Nông Thôn</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Minister of Open Arms <i>Tổng Trưởng Chiêu Hồi</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Minister of Land Reform and Agricultural-Fishery Development <i>Tổng Trưởng Cải Cách Điền Địa và Phát Triển Nông Ngư Nghiệp</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Minister of Social Affairs <i>Tổng Trưởng Xã Hội</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Labor Minister <i>Tổng Trưởng Lao Động</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Veterans Minister <i>Tổng Trưởng Cựu Chiến Binh</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Minister of Ethnic Minorities Development <i>Tổng Trưởng Phát Triển Sắc Tộc</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Minister of the Office of the Premier <i>Bộ Trưởng Phủ Thủ Tướng</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Interior Minister <i>Thủ Trưởng Nội Vụ</i> (Member)</li> <li>● Directorate General of Political Warfare <i>Tổng Cục Trưởng Tổng Cục Chiến Tranh Chính Trị</i> (Member)</li> </ul>

Table 1: Formal Compositions of Central Directing Bodies of PSP.

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- <sup>i</sup> This lists the committee formed during the “second phase” of the CDTC (“Chương Trình Đại Hội Sơ Kết Đợt 3 Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng của Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư,” dated 5/2/1956, PTUDCTN 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*). For the earlier committees formed at the beginning of the CDTC, see cited document as well as “Biên Bản Đại Hội Nghị thảo luận về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng nói chung và tuần lễ phát động chiến dịch ấy nói riêng,” dated 7/14/1955, PTTVNCH 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*.
- <sup>ii</sup> “Vấn Đề Học Tập,” attached to CV 86-BPTT dated 7/5/1958, in PTTĐỊCH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*.
- <sup>iii</sup> CV 755-B-ĐUHC/NCS dated 12/14/1963, PTTVNCH 29293, *Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trong giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964*. This document outlines the structure of the PSP prior to the “November Revolution.”
- <sup>iv</sup> CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*.
- <sup>v</sup> 586-NĐ/P.Th.T/VP dated 5/22/1969, PTTVNCH 30270, *Tài liệu của PThT, Bộ Quốc Phòng v/v thành lập Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Hướng Dẫn học tập tại Trung Ương và các Tỉnh năm 1969*.
- <sup>vi</sup> CV 1147-a/NĐ/Th.T dated 10/28/1969, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.
- <sup>vii</sup> 367/NĐ/ThT/BĐPT dated 4/6/1970, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

This central directing body had the responsibility of assigning study materials, producing “Recent Events” reports and supplementary materials, disseminating these materials to the individual organs, and appraising the progress of political study from submitted reports. Assignment of materials for specific weeks of study were not as regular or efficient as it could have been. Indeed, many weeks are left to the discretion of individual organs. What was expected, however, was the regularization of these study sessions whether the central directing body assigned specific documents for study or not. Furthermore, session organizers of individual organs were expected to provide additional supplementary materials for study if the central directing body does not.

Under the First Republic, non-governmental organizations like the National Revolutionary Movement and the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants also conducted their own sessions. Later PSP activities were largely isolated to the administration and the military, although occasional telegrams and reports from mass study sessions at the village and district levels—which included religious groupings and political factions—were also sent in. This was the case, for example, immediately following the signings of the Paris Peace Accords during which the Thiệu administration sought to control the narrative concerning prospects of peace. Under the Second Republic, state-associated commercial entities such as the National Bank and the Saigon Water Utilities Company (Saigon Thủy Cục) engaged in government-directed study sessions.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the Republic, sessions generally entailed meetings—either once or twice a week—amounting to 1 to 2 weekly hours of “study.” In general, study documents were handed out prior to each meeting and participants would gather on the scheduled date and time to hear presentational talks and discuss the topic of study for that week. A topic of study often lasted a month and a general review was hosted after each topic was completed by a ministry. Scheduled topic of study in one organ was not always necessarily the same as another organ. Certain topics, however, were mandatory—particularly those directly assigned by the central directing body or speeches by the President, Premier, or high-ranking officials. Others relating to national holidays (such as Day of National Resentment *Ngày Quốc Hận*, National Day *Lễ Quốc Khánh*, and New Years *Tết*) or events of political importance (such as the Buddhist Crisis in 1963, the Struggle Movement of 1966, the aftermath of the Easter Offensive in 1972, and the Paris Peace Accords of 1973) had to be timely completed. For the most part, however, individual directing bodies were able to select their own topics of study.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> CV 3857/BTT/UBCĐHT/TU dated 10/2/1969, CV 4543/BTT/NHK/NCKH dated 11/17/1969, CV 5018/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 12/22/1969, and “báo cáo tình hình học tập trong tháng 12-1929,” PTTVNCH 30271, *Báo cáo của các Phủ, Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập chính trị năm 1969*.

<sup>10</sup> On organizational structure and mandatory study topics, see documents cited in subsequent footnote. On scheduling and time dedicated: First official directive by Trần Chánh Thành related to scheduling issued that “each week 2 or 3 sessions of research and study be organized in organs” (CV 1578/NTT/VP dated 8/13/1955, PTTVNCH 29164, *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*). Office of Prime Minister reported 2 hours weekly in late 1955 (“Báo Cáo Tổng Kết của Ban Chi Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng tại Phủ Thủ Tướng” dated 9.27.1955, PTTVNCH 14734: *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*). In 1958, study sessions were reduced to 1 hour per meeting, with the expectation that 2 sessions each for rank 1 and rank 2 cadres be conducted weekly (“Vấn Đề Học Tập,” attached to CV 86-BPTT dated 7/5/1958, in PTTĐỊCH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*). In 1965, following the reestablishment of regular political study, the Office of the Executive Commissioner dictated that organizers were to dedicate a total of 2 sessions per month, each lasting no more than 2 hours (CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in

Sessions entailed a presider who served as both a discussion leader and organizer of a session, a presenter who orally summarizes the fundamental ideas conveyed in the study document, and a secretary who records the presentation and the ensuing discussion. Discussions after the presentation are often opportunities for participants to raise their own queries, concerns, and comments relating to the topic of study and the presenter and the presider would jointly seek to address any outstanding issues. Questions that the presenter nor the presider could answer were passed onto higher echelons to address. Discussions, however, were often scant and only the most pressing of questions were recorded. Organizers and presenters also often asked previously devised questions based on study materials to participants to review what has been learned.

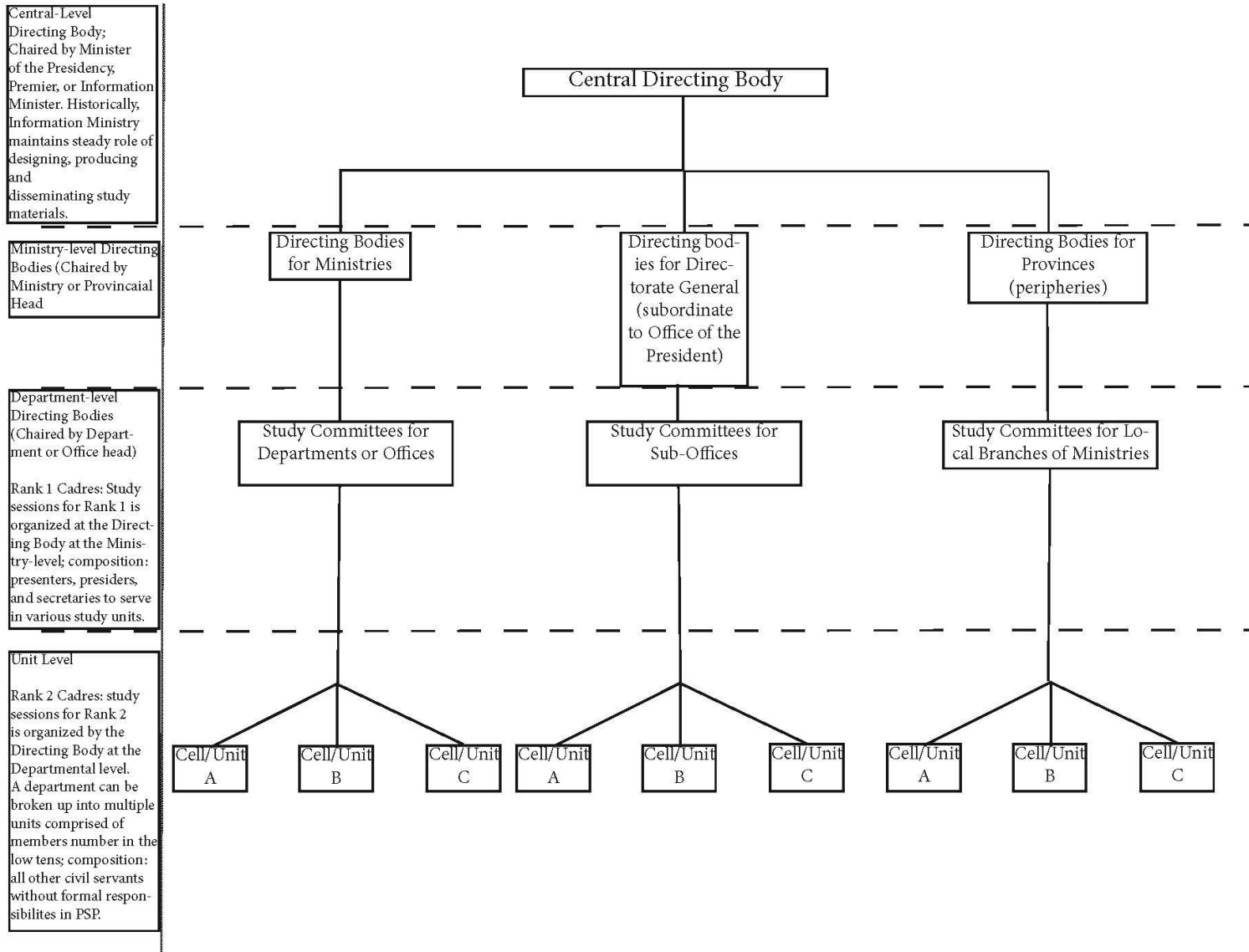
Political study sessions are often structured in accordance with the existing administrative divisions. Individual ministries and administrative organs established their own directive bodies for political study and these organ-specific bodies. At these ministry-level bodies, the ministerial head usually had the task of general oversight. Although these directive bodies were initially composed of cadres trained and vetted through the CDTC who served as presenters, presidors, and organizers of study sessions, later iterations of the program conformed more closely to existing administrative divisions. Reporting to these ministry-level directive bodies were multiple study units—usually organized according to departments and offices that belonged to each ministry. These department-level bodies were generally responsible for quotidian PSP activities and scheduling. An organizational outline of the PSP is illustrated below.<sup>11</sup>

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TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*). In 1969, study sessions were to be conducted weekly in 1.5-2 hours blocs (CV 2962/BTT/UBCĐHT/TU dated 7/31/1969, PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*). Under the General Information Program, study sessions were to be conducted weekly (“Kiểm Điểm và Thông Nhứt Tư Tưởng về một đường lối thực hiện công tác thông tin đại chúng,” dated 10/28/1970, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*). In 1970, in Quảng Tín Province, 2 weekly study sessions were scheduled at the District level: 1 session for civil servants, 1 session for soldiers. For Open Arms ralliers (hội chánh), these sessions were to be conducted once per month (1076/UBĐVCT/QT dated 4/29/1970, PTTVNCH 30444, *Báo cáo học tập hàng tháng của các Nha, Sở thuộc PThT năm 1970*). In the same year, the Office of the Prime Minister, which had greater leeway in scheduling, organized one session every two weeks (“CV 167/ĐV/PThT/BC dated 10/2/1970, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*). For typical scheduling procedures, an example is provided by the 1961 General Office of Taxation which encompass reports of month to month organization of which cell would study which topic at what time each week (see TQT 4122, *Tài liệu của Bộ Tài Chánh, Ủy Ban chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế, các nha, sở trao đổi về học tập và các hoạt động khác năm 1955-1967*).

<sup>11</sup> Developed from organizational outline articulated in the 1958 reconfiguration of the PSP. The format remained consistent throughout the duration of the Republican era (“Vấn Đề Học Tập,” attached to CV 86-BPTT dated 7/5/1958, in PTTĐỊCH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*). Subsequent outlines: Discussion Movement in 1965 (CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*), Nationwide Political Study Movement in 1969 (2962/BTT/UBCĐHT/TU dated 7/31/1969, PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*), General Information Program in 1970 (“Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v thực thi chương trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng” circa May 1970, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*).

Graph 2: Model of PSP Organizational Structure.



The structural configuration of the PSP ensured that dissemination of ideological messages flowed systematically from the central directing body to the various local units within administrative organs. Reports flowed upward, allowing superior bodies to ensure that PSP activities were regular and properly monitored. In general, at the lowest level of organization, each unit of the PSP was comprised of participants numbering in the tens. The department or office head generally served as the presider of the session, while presenters and secretaries were usually selected by departmental heads or elected by participants within each PSP unit. Outside of the central ministries of the Republican government, peripheral provinces are organized in accordance with jurisdiction. Rather than establishing directive committees at the ministry-level, reports and guidelines indicate that general oversight of PSP activities in the peripheries were directed by the provincial heads or their aides. At the unit-level, study activities amongst administrative personnel were organized in accordance with district, wards, and hamlets. Less monitored than the activities within the government center, it was occasionally the case that cadres trained and based at the government center were sent to these peripheral provinces to ensure systematic regular PSP activities, engage in mass mobilization for key state projects, and educate the citizens in the peripheries about state goals and ideals. This pattern was seen during the CDTC of the First Republic as well as the General Information Program of the Second Republic and the efforts of the General Directorate of Civic Mobilization following the signings in Paris.

Beginning in 1958, the PSP became organized into cohorts of 10-20 individuals. Initially called “study cells” *tổ học tập*, these cohorts were later relabeled as “study assemblies” *học hội* or “study units” *đơn vị học tập*. Each unit was composed of subdivisions within a department and often headed by a body composed of the highest-ranking personnel, selected individuals to serve as presenters, and regular secretaries. The 1958 system reorganized all participants into two “ranks.” Presenters, along with the various heads of departments within a ministry, constitute the 1<sup>st</sup> rank in the new system. These individuals attended weekly study sessions directly hosted by the Directing Committee at the ministry-level. During these Rank 1 sessions, members collectively developed a stylistic presentation draft of the topic for that week’s political study, standardizing and simplifying the ideological materials so that it would be easily accessible and catered the draft to the requirements of their individual cells. With this draft, presenters and organizers from Rank 1 would return to their individual cells to present and hold study sessions. Individuals who were not session organizers or presenters were considered part of Rank 2 under the new system.<sup>12</sup> Subsequent iterations of the PSP continued to implement the two-rank system to streamline the dissemination of state messages.

The organizational and aspirational consistency of the PSP throughout the Republican era highlights the perceived effectiveness of the practice by its orchestrators, even if the Program was occasionally implemented haphazardly and state messages, in instances, faced opposition and resistance by the very participants whom the Program was meant to indoctrinate. Moreover, this consistency illustrates continuous reutilization and the reproduction of practical repertoires established under the First Republic despite the coups, regime changes, and political turmoil that characterizes Republican history. While efforts for state control over the ideological edifice of a nation is hardly a new phenomenon, the unique ambitions, structure, systematization, and rigidity of political indoctrination during the Republican era necessitates exploration. Much of these

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



characteristics can be traced to the early years of the Republic and the role of the Cần Lao Personalist Party (CLP) in the affairs of state and governance. Below, this chapter turns to the political philosophy and mobilization activities of the CLP to locate the organizational origins and initial inspiration of the Political Study Program.

## ORIGINS AND INSPIRATION

Political Study was conceived as part of a philosophy that sought to change the human condition. This change entailed not only the social and economic circumstances in which man lived, but also the way he thought, behaved, and acted. Indeed, the idea behind these often two hour-long, weekly seminars were not only to convey ideology to participants, but to ensure that the ideas presented permeate into their minds and behaviors. Such a pedagogical conception came about in tandem with a philosophy of anticommunism, modernity, and citizenry that has come to be synonymous with Ngô family: Personalism.

When the Geneva Accords were signed between the Vietminh Forces and France on July 20<sup>th</sup> 1954, it effectively ended the First Indochina War (1946-1954) and partitioned Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel. Military and political forces would regroup to each side of the partition: Vietminh and Communist forces to the North, and those who held allegiance to the Associated State of Vietnam and noncommunist forces to the South. Countrywide elections for reunification were scheduled to be held two years from the signing on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1956. For a great number of these noncommunist forces and former Vietnamese functionaries of this Associated State under the French Union, this meant political destabilization of their ranks. The Cần Lao Personalist Party (*Đảng Cần Lao Nhân Vị*, CLP), led by the Ngô brothers, took full advantage of the situation to not only build their ranks, but also to create a “unified” anticommunist organization amongst the northern emigres and former members of non-communist nationalist organizations.<sup>13</sup>

After the signing of the Accords, the CLP organized political and social activities of incoming refugees by supplying camps with funding, “mobilizing” the emigres into resistance activities, enacting measures to purify these camps of social ills, keeping tabs and ridding these camps of “rotten” individuals, and attempting to place northern emigres into positions within the southern administration.<sup>14</sup> These activities of the CLP within the community of northern migrants, however, was not a matter of good faith, but was rather the laying of groundwork for what the Diệm administration would later call a “National Revolution.” Indeed, in the immediate months following their migration to the south, emigres were integrated into a tightly controlled, highly structured political organization that sought to penetrate the civil and governmental apparatus in the attempt to actualize holistic transformation of the south Vietnamese society.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Sau khi ban chấp hành lâm thời RB Bắc Việt đã thành lập và trong đó có toàn thể anh em củ các tỉnh bộ của Phong Trào dân chúng Liên Hiệp và Xã Hội Công Giáo đã đôn ý gia nhập vào Cần Lao...được mọi giới hoan nghênh gia nhập nhất là các đảng phái quốc gia củ như: V. Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, Duy Tân, Đại Việt, Cách Mạng Đông Minh, Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Dân Tộc, Phúc Quốc v.v.” quoted from handwritten “Báo Cáo BMI,” 1.24.1955 in PTTVNCH 29361, *Về Hoạt Động của Cần Lao Nhân Vị Cách Mạng Đảng (Đảng Cần Lao Việt Nam) năm 1953-1964*.

<sup>14</sup> Cần Lao Nhân Vị Cách Mạng, “Biên Bản Họp: Đại Hội Nghị Kỳ Bộ Bắc Việt Ngày 16 Tháng 1 Năm 1955,” and “Đề Án Kế Hoạch Công Tác Toàn Bộ của Ban Chấp Hành Kỳ Bộ Bắc Việt ngày 28-1-1955” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH.

<sup>15</sup> Although official formed in September of 1954, operations of anticommunist cadres who would later come to be part of the CLP began as early as 1952. With its center of operations in Hải Phòng, the port city from which many

From the beginning, the operations of CLP placed great emphasis on regular oversight and ideological training of its members. Organizational materials of the CLP from 1954 boasted a 15,000-strong organization structured upon the premise of “democratic centralism.”<sup>16</sup> Party members, or “cadres,” operated within “cells” which were organized into a pyramid structure divided into, from the bottom up, Wards, Districts, Provinces, and multi-provinces level—a structure borrowed from the organizing techniques of the communist party.<sup>17</sup> All cells are directed by a central committee that oversees cadres at a national level. Cadres were carefully monitored and were expected to draft regular reports to their superiors before, during, and after their assigned duties. These reports were utilized by superiors to “inspect, supervise the actualization of the ideals and policies of the Party.”<sup>18</sup>

Beyond obeying the immediate directives of their superiors, cadres were to engage in the propagandistic and political activities for the Party. Cadres were to “lead the masses” of their designated areas by forming civil organizations like women’s and youth groups, work in collaboration with and within the administration to rid the government of corruption and ills, engage in active propaganda, and lead Popular Education classes. To ensure that CLP members could actually “lead,” the Party developed programs to cultivate the capable and politically conscious cadre.<sup>19</sup>

The Party’s goal was to form a “bloc of leadership cadres” who were well trained, were charismatic, and had “studied struggle” as to properly aid in realizing the Party’s vision. What the CLP desired were not simply social workers, but rather politically motivated “warriors” who

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northern emigres departed to the south, proto-CLP elements—in coalition with other anticommunist groups in the north—engaged in both organizing the departures as well as propagandistic efforts against that of the Vietminh. These individuals were directed to infiltrate civil societal organizations. During the immediate days following the signing of the Geneva Accords, the proto-CLP cadres aided the creation of a Committee to Protect North Vietnam (Ủy Ban Bảo Vệ Bắc Việt). The purpose of the committee was to oppose the takeover of the north by the communist forces and, more importantly, the facilitate the migration of national loyalists to the south. In collaboration with the North Vietnam Department of Information, the Committee organized a major protest in Hải Phòng, organized a “meeting” in Hải Phòng to commemorate those who had been killed by the Vietminh in their attempt to flee and propagated the activities of those in Hải Phòng to those in Hà Nội as a model of resistance (Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Chống Cộng, CV 523/TBCN, 12.24.54 and “Báo Cáo Tổng Quát tình hình Bắc Việt của Đồng Chí Bí Thư đọc trước quốc hội nghị ngày 1-1-55 về Đệ lực cá nguyệt cuối năm 1954,” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH, *Về Hoạt Động của Cán Lao Nhân Vị Cách Mạng Đảng (Đảng Cán Lao Việt Nam) năm 1953-1964*).

<sup>16</sup> “Nguyên tắc tổ chức: đảng tổ chức và hoạt động theo nguyên tắc dân chủ tập trung; -các cơ quan chỉ đạo đều do tuyên cư lập nên; trong trường hợp khó khăn, tạm thời sẽ do cấp trên chỉ định và ủy nhiệm; -các nghị quyết lấy theo dân chủ qua bàn(đá số); trước khi nghị quyết, tất cả đều được phát biểu ý kiến của mình; -thiếu số phục tùng đa số; hạ cấp phục tùng thượng cấp” cited from “Đảng Cương” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH; see also “Biên Bản Hợp: Đại Hội Nghị Kỳ Bộ Bắc Việt Ngày 16 Tháng 1 Năm 1955,” document reports 15,382 members by January of 1955, with 300 trained in specializations and “90%” of member had “clearly awareness of the direction of struggle of the Party.”

<sup>17</sup> “Đảng Cương,” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH; See also Phạm, Thúc Sơn, “Những Trụ Cột Chính Trị-Xã Hội của Chính Quyền Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa ở Miền Nam Việt Nam (1954-1963)” *Tạp Chí Đại Học Thủ Dầu Một*, 3(22): 2015, 45-52.

<sup>18</sup> Regular monthly reports were also expected on the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month (“Đảng Cương” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH). Model of report found in “Dự Án: Báo Cáo,” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH.

<sup>19</sup> The party emphasized the political education of its cadres through not only “learning from the masses” *học hỏi quần chúng*, but also “self training” *tự huấn luyện*, self criticism *tự phê bình* and abstinence from alcohol, gambling, and prostitution (“Đảng Cương” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH); and “Đề Án Kế Hoạch Công Tác Toàn Bộ của Ban Chấp Hành Kỳ Bộ Bắc Việt ngày 28-1-1955” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH.

would be prepared to cope with the enduring threat of communism and infiltration. The aim was, through the cadre, the creation of an ever-ready militarized and ideologically “righteous” society could be achieved.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, the ideological molding of cadres, and subsequently citizens, would be a core objective of the CLP throughout its lifespan. Training of cadres emphasized two aspects: political and specialization. Specialization meant occupation-related training so that cadres would perform well as they are placed within the administration. The political training of cadres meant that cadres would not only be versed in the ideology of the party, but also were able to integrate the fundamentals of the ideology into their thoughts and actions.<sup>21</sup>

This internalization of ideals was essential for the holistic revolutionizing of the Vietnamese society, and for that revolution to succeed, those engaging in the revolution must first revolutionize the self. This “revolution of the self” was a core principle in Personalism. The official ideology of the CLP, Personalism was a doctrine that merged ideals of Western modernity, staunch opposition to communism, and humanism into an indigenous political philosophy that totalizes the conditions and fate of the Vietnamese nation with that of the Vietnamese self. According to Ngô Đình Nhu—often described as the “father of Personalism”—Personalist philosophy stands apart from both Capitalism and Communism. Capitalism, for Nhu “represented certain spiritual, cultural, and economic values in the nineteenth century... [that has] outlived its time.” Certain components of Marxism were accepted in Personalism, but Personalists rejected the Marxist’s “materialist approach” and “the conclusions concerning the dictatorship of the proletariat.” Both philosophies were deemed as alien to the context of Vietnam, stemming from the modernistic developments of the European West and its reliance on materialism. The “path” that Vietnam must inevitably take will be one centered on “spiritual values,” as well as a rejection of “the bourgeoisie, feudal lords, colonialism, and white racism.” The revolution envisioned was to be an alternative to the path of Western modernity which “counters materialism with a belief in freedom of the individual, creative power, and a national spirit combined with individual activity.”<sup>22</sup>

Personalism emphasized liberation. Personalists saw humanity as engaged in a historical and universal quest for progress and transformation. This quest was defined by a never-ending struggle for Man’s liberation; not solely from that of material wants, but also the liberation of the “spirit.”<sup>23</sup> Despite the modern achievements of Man, this modernity had failed to deliver on the latter. According to the 1954 CLP Manifesto, “man has gradually been pushed by material goods and consequently inherited a forfeited life, everyday further away from the meaning and purpose

<sup>20</sup> “Chiến Đấu với Đức Tin: Muốn thực hiện lý tưởng CMNV, mỗi con người phải trở nên một Chiến Sĩ của CMNV” quoted from “Đảng Cương” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH.

<sup>21</sup> “Đề Án Kế Hoạch Công Tác Toàn Bộ của Ban Chấp Hành Kỳ Bộ Bắc Việt ngày 28-1-1955” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH. Cadres at every level, from the central committee to the local cells, were required to undergo a duration of training. Members at the middle level (provincial and district) were required to have anywhere from 3 to 8 months of training, while those at the local level, 1 week to 15 days (“Dự Án Tổ Chức Cán Bộ,” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH)

<sup>22</sup>On a discussion between Ngô Đình Nhu, Cabot Lodge, and Giovanni d’Orlandi on the issue of communications made between Nhu and Hồ Chí Minh in 1963. Nguyễn Đức Thiện, *Diễn Tiến và Hậu Quả Hiệp Định Paris 1973 về Việt Nam*. 2004 citing Maneli, Mieczyslaw, *War of the Vanquished*. Harper Row Publishers, New York (1999), 144-145.

<sup>23</sup> “Lịch sử tiến hóa của nhân loại đã minh xác sức tranh đấu không ngừng của con Người để tự giải phóng về vật chất cũng như về tinh thần” quoted from “Cần Lao Nhân Vị Cách Mạng Đảng: Tuyên Ngôn,” dated August 1954, Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH.

of that struggle for true human progress.”<sup>24</sup> The many achievements in technology, political order and wealth still resulted in much of the world living under poverty, facing exploitation, and experiencing inequality. Western modernity, rather than liberating Man, led to humanity to be “hereditarily enslaved to serve materialism.” In response to this disjuncture between “progress of modernity” and its inability to satisfying much of human needs, the CLP called for a “Personalist Revolution”—a revolution envisioned to holistically liberate the totality of human existence.<sup>25</sup>

For the Personalist, this revolution was a continuation of that quest for total liberation as well as a historical mission—the only path that could achieve true progress for Man. This revolution meant the liberation of the person from the greed, the poverty, and authoritarianism that came with the advancements of the material world. This revolution, on the one hand, would return to the “person” its rightful dignity, remove all forms of coercion upon the person, and create the circumstances in which “every capability and goodness of a person can freely and holistically blossom and develop.” The “person” must be valued and respected and his basic necessity be met and safeguarded.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the CLP envisioned a Vietnam that could fully provide for its citizens. This necessitates a “revolution of the material.” Production, as seen by the CLP, must be based on need, and that the sciences and technology must serve humanity, not vice versa. Personalist Vietnam would provide both social and economic justice as well as enough so that “anyone would have enough to eat, clothes to wear, and house to live, be healthy and have convenient transportation.” To achieve such a model society, the CLP believed that every citizen of Vietnam must participate in such a mission of creating this Personalist Vietnam, for after all, it was their honored duty to those who came before them.<sup>27</sup>

CLP cadres were expected to not only familiarize themselves with the Personalist doctrine, they “must have enough belief” in the success of this Revolution, the total liberation of man, and the creation of that brighter and better Vietnam. Cadres must engage in a collective “revolution of the spirit,” absorbing the ideology of Personalism regarding the value and importance of the human person. In order to achieve this, the cadre must “train their spirit, based on a new educational foundation... [which] will develop fundamental virtues.” They must “firmly grasp” the ideology of the Party in order for them to “develop [these] positive virtues,” be able to lead the masses, and engage effectively in revolutionary struggle.<sup>28</sup> All Party-related activities must be tailored to this “revolution of the spirit.”

In January of 1955, the CLP instituted a “class” called “học tập thảo luận” or “study and discussion” as part of their projected plan of activities for the year. This class began as province-wide conferences intended for participants to “discuss and absorb” the ideological position and policies of the Party, “unify” the activities of the different cells, and engage in the “study of recent events.” These conferences were presentational sessions where talks were given on

<sup>24</sup> “Những trái bao thế hệ... đáng lẽ phải tạo nên một cuộc sống xứng đáng thì con Người đã dần dần, bị vật chất xô đẩy và có một quan niệm nhân sinh lầm lạc, càng ngày càng xa với ý nghĩa và mục đích trong hướng tranh đấu cho mình thực sự của nhân loại,” *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> “Sở dĩ xây ra tình trạng như vậy, là vì một quan điểm nhân sinh lầm lạc đã bao trùm nền văn minh hiện đại, khiến cho con người đã thất lạc địa vị của mình và làm sai mục đích chiến đấu thiên liên của lịch sử Nhân loại” cited from “Đảng Cương” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH

<sup>26</sup> “tạo lập những điều kiện tinh thần và vật chất thích hợp để cho mỗi khả năng tốt đẹp của con người có thể tự do hoàn toàn nảy nở được,” *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Listed as Confucian fundamental virtues of *Nhân* (Humanism), *Nghĩa* (Fairness), *Trí* (Judgement), *Tin* (Trustworthiness), and *Hòa Ái* (Peaceloving). *Ibid.*

specialized topics. Through these conferences, the cadres would, theoretically, first “learn,” then “ask” and finally “enact.”<sup>29</sup> Ideals taught and discussed at these conferences were to be integrated into the political, social, and everyday life of the cadre. Cadres in leadership positions would have their own conferences lasting from 10-15 days. The purposes of which would be to learn the fundamentals of Personalist Revolution as well as “five revolutionary tasks”: oversight, propaganda, organization, training, and struggle.<sup>30</sup> Study materials were provided through the Party’s local office and vetted by the Party’s central directing body.

Outside of these conferences, the CLP left the task of “education and cultivation” to the leadership of each province according to their convenience. This entailed not only study sessions at the local level, but also the assignment of Party-related work that would aid in the practical application of the Personalist ideal. What was expected was that at least one day of the month must be devoted to “study,” criticism and self-criticism so that the cadre develops morally and ideologically into a model representative of the Party.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the First Republic, the CLP maintained a steady control over the ideological operations of the regime. Historical records and scholarship on the CLP are scarce and what can be surmised about its operations and internal politics are gleaned from its influence on more public organizations like the National Revolutionary Movement, the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants, the Women’s Solidarity Movement, the Republican Youths, as well as its ability to position its membership into seats of administrative and military power. These organizations were structured in accordance with the operational model the CLP established in 1954. State projects—such as the CDTC—also operated within the same pyramid-based organizational format. Each of these organizations were controlled by a central directing body and subsequent layers of operations from the provincial down to the ward. Each had their own cohorts of cadres—ideologically trained and meant to actualize decisions made at the very top of the organization within the broader population. These cadres—whether NRM or CDTC or Republican Youth or any of the other organizations—were to be “leaders” of the masses, mobilizing and utilizing this broader population to enact the vision of the organization’s leaders. Cadre formation, regular reports, continuous oversight, and decision-making power as primarily isolated to the central directive body made tight control over the actions of cadres possible.

The PSP, too, was shaped by the early activities of the CLP. The PSP pedagogical model clearly derived from the CLP’s ideological training operations—a transplanted component of the Party that was modified to serve the ideological imperatives of the South Vietnamese state. Trần Chánh Thành, after all, was an early CLP member and so were many top officials of the Republican regime. Like the training operations conducted in the CLP, the PSP implemented regular sessions of ideological training, disseminated ideas from the top through a tightly monitored apparatus, and sought the transformation of an individual’s mind and subsequently his actions. Sessions of presenters and discussion mirrored the ideological training the CLP offered its cadres. Even the division between “political” topics and “specialization” were integrated into the programming of the PSP. The PSP served as a mechanism for actualizing that Personalist “revolution of the self.” Rather simply the transformation of CLP cadre, however, the Program

<sup>29</sup> *Học—Hỏi—Hành*. “Đề Án Kế Hoạch Công Tác Toàn Bộ của Ban Chấp Hành Kỳ Bộ Bắc Việt ngày 28-1-1955” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH.

<sup>30</sup> *điều tra, tuyên truyền, tổ chức, huấn luyện, and đấu tranh*. Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> The expectation for non-leadership cadres were laxer, and organizational directives emphasized “light activities” with concerns towards the competition of duties and “self-criticism.” Ibid.

was a means through which this transformation could be accomplished for the ordinary civil servants of the regime.

#### INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE PSP

The history of the Republic was a tumultuous one, filled with regime changes, coups, and administrative shifts. Below, this section details the institutional history of the PSP. The section is meant as a guide for later discussions on matters of historical continuity and persistence, specific narratives developed through the PSP, and how ideas developed within the state make their way to general political discourse within the Republican civil society. Chronologically, the section will historically document developments in the PSP from its formation during the CDTC of the First Republic to political study efforts following the Paris Peace Accords during the final years of the Second. The section will focus on discursive emphases found in PSP study materials and their relationship to structural and organizational changes to the PSP within the context of broader political and administrative transitions within the Republican state. Although administrative changes often brought with them different ideological emphases, values of nationalism and anticommunism were readily apparent in political study materials regardless of whatever administration was in power. Below is a graphical summary of the major structural changes that occurred throughout the history of the PSP and the changing ideological emphases that characterized each period.

Table 2: Graphical Summary of Structural Changes to PSP.

Phase	Timespan	Body Established for Oversight of PSP	Ideological Focus	Primary Directing Organ	Primary Official(s) Responsible	Administration
<i>First Republic</i>	Aug. 1955-Aug. 1958	Central Directive Committee for the Communist Denunciation Campaign (Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Chiến Dịch Tố Cộng)	Communist Denunciation	Ministry of Information	Trần Chánh Thành (Minister of Information)	Ngô Đình Diệm (Prime Minister; President)
<i>First Republic</i>	Aug. 1958-Dec. 1960	Central Directive Committee for Political Study (Ủy Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Trung Ương)	National Development and International Recognition	Ministry of Information	Trần Chánh Thành (Minister of Information)	Ngô Đình Diệm (President)
<i>First Republic</i>	Jan. 1961-Nov. 1963	Central Directive Committee for Political Study (Ủy Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Trung Ương)	Personalism and South Vietnamese Development	Directorate General of Information, Công Dân Vụ, Office of the President (Giám Đốc Thông Tin, Civic Commissariat, Phủ Tổng Thống)	Ngô Đình Nhu (Political Advisor to the President), Ngô Trọng Hiếu (Director of the Civic Commissariat)	Ngô Đình Diệm (President)
<i>Interregnum</i>	Jun. 1965-Nov. 1967	Central Directive Council for Study Materials (Hội Đồng Hướng Dẫn Tài Liệu)	Democratic Development and Justification for Military Rule	Ministry of Psychological Warfare; Ministry of Information and Open Arms (Bộ Thông Tin Chiêu Hồi);	Định Chính Trình (Minister of Psychological Warfare); Nguyễn Bảo Trị (Minister of Information and Open Arms);	Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (Premier)
<i>Second Republic</i>	April 1968-May 1969	Central Directive Council for Study Materials (Hội Đồng Hướng Dẫn Tài Liệu)	President's position on peace and negotiations	Directorate General of Information; Ministry of Information	Tôn Thất Thiện, Minister of Information (May 1968-Nov. 1968); Nguyễn Ngọc An (Nov. 1968-Nov. 1969)	Trần Văn Hương (Premier)
<i>Second Republic</i>	May 1969-Oct. 1969	Central Directive Committee for Political Study (Ủy Ban Chi Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương)	Peace, Paris Conference, and general mobilization for war effort	Ministry of Information	Nguyễn Ngọc An (Nov. 1968-Nov. 1969)	Trần Văn Hương (Premier)
<i>Second Republic</i>	Oct. 1969-Dec. 1972	Committee for Political Mobilization (Ủy Ban Động Viên Chính Trị); Central Committee for General Information (Ủy Ban Thông Tin Đại Chúng, Trung Ương)	Peace, Paris Conference, and general mobilization for war effort	Central Council for Pacification and Development, Office of the Prime Minister (Hội Đồng Bình Định và Phát Triển Trung Ương, Phủ Thủ Tướng)	Ngô Khắc Tinh, Minister of Information (Oct 1969-Jun 1971); Trương Bửu Điện, Minister of Information (Jun. 1971-Jan 1973)	Trần Thiện Khiêm (Premier)
<i>Second Republic</i>	Jan. 1973-Jan. 1975	Directorate General of Civic Mobilization (Phủ Tổng Ủy Dân Vận)	The Paris Peace Accords	Directorate General of Civic Mobilization, Office of the President (Phủ Tổng Ủy Dân Vận, Phủ Tổng Thống)	Hoàng Đức Nhã, Director of Civic Mobilization (Jan 1973-Nov 1974); Hồ Văn Châm, Acting Minister of Information and Civic Mobilization (Nov 1974-Apr 1975)	Trần Thiện Khiêm (Premier)

*The First Republic (1955-1963)*

During the First Republic, PSP activities can be divided into three periods characterized by the changing structural leadership of the program and development of ideological contents in PSP study materials. While the PSP was designed to inculcate ideology, the program was also utilized to justify the decisions and policies of the Republic to its state personnel and dove heavily to political developments within and outside the nation, providing PSP participants ideological guidance for “correct” interpretation of news and unfolding events. In large part, the Information Ministry held substantial sway over the direction of the PSP during its initial years. However, following reconfiguration of the PSP in 1958, PSP activities became progressively controlled by the Office of the Presidency, culminating in the official elimination of the Information Ministry in late 1960. Study activities came under the purview of the General Directorate of Information, which was subordinate to the newly established Ministry of the Civic Commissariat, reporting directly to the Office of the President and the Presidential Political Advisor, Ngô Đình Nhu.

Bounded to the activities of the CDTC, the PSP began on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1955 with the initiation of the “second stage” of the CDTC. As conceptualized by its orchestrators, the CDTC was divided into multiple “stages” *đợt*. The period from July 16<sup>th</sup> to August 8<sup>th</sup> is what Trần Chánh Thành would later refer to as the “First Stage of the CDTC.”<sup>32</sup> The Second Stage—lasting 5 weeks—began with a national conference to institute the PSP and lasted until September 15<sup>th</sup>. The Third Stage would not occur until December of 1955<sup>33</sup> and ended in May of 1956. Later reconceptualization of the CDTC grouped these three stages into a single “phase,” and the period from May of 1956 until September of 1958 marked the “Second Phase” of the CDTC. In practice, however, movement from one stage to the next varied. Some organs were slower than others. The Office of the Prime Minister and the Representative Assembly, for example, did not begin the second stage until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, citing bureaucratic delays.<sup>34</sup> Most important for the orchestrators of the Campaign was that “study materials” assigned to each stage be completed before proceeding to the next.

During the CDTC, political study was largely utilized as a vehicle for communist denunciation and proselytizing of South Vietnamese anticommunism. PSP operations during this period was heavily dominated by CDTC cadres who were ideologically trained, had mobilizing and organizing experience, were properly vetted by the central directing body, and served as ideological inspectorates in their respective organs. Session materials revolved around three main themes: the condemnation of the Geneva Accords, anti-neutralism and the necessity of “resolute thoughts,” and making known the “sins of communism.” Each of these three themes were stand-alone study materials handed out on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1955 to representatives of different governmental

<sup>32</sup> Timeline laid out in “Chương Trình: Thời Gian Đợt 2.” Received at the PTT on 8-24-1955; CV 1933. In PTTVNCH:14734.

<sup>33</sup> Trần Chánh Thành sent out a memo for a meeting to conduct an overview of “the plan to initiate stage 3 of the Communist Denunciation Campaign” and revise the Leading Committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 1955 (CV Số 9476-VPĐB. TĐBCPNP [1945-1959]: 1125). A review of collected CDTC reports from northern émigré camps demonstrates that cited the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase did not occur until December 8<sup>th</sup> of 1955 (Letter sent for “Tài liệu dị thi thi đua sáng tác văn nghệ tổ cộng. PTUDCTN: 52). Similarly, activities for stage 3 began in December for the Ministry of Education (“Báo Cáo Tháng 11 năm 1955 về hoạt động của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục” in CV Số 760-GD/GD in PTTĐỊCH 15994)

<sup>34</sup> CV Số 43-PTT/ĐL. Dated 8.25.1955 In PTTVNCH: 14734; CV Số 5139/VP/NG/C dated 8.26.1955. in PTTVNCH: 14734.



organs who were sent to a national training conference hosted by the Ministry of Information.<sup>35</sup> From this first session of PSP training to September of 1958, various study materials were crafted based on these three main themes by the CDTC Central Directive Committee for use in study sessions nationwide. Individual administrative organs also relied on these three themes to craft unique study materials of their own.<sup>36</sup>

Beyond these CDTC-specific themes, political study during this first period was also characterized by issues of civic education, democracy, and constitutional rights. During and after the National Assembly election in March of 1956, documents detailing the importance and procedures of national elections, democratic practices, the Republican constitution, and duties and responsibilities of citizens were incorporated into the PSP curriculum. The elected first National Assembly of the Republic was tasked with writing the Republican Constitution which was completed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 1956. Later study sessions during the year focused on reading and studying the Constitution.<sup>37</sup> In late 1956, the Ministry of Information also began distributing “Recent Events” reports to PSP sessions to be utilized in conjunction with primary

<sup>35</sup> CV Số 1468-BTT/VP dated 8.4.1955 and CV Số 1578/BTT/VP dated 8.13.1955 in Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. PTTVNCH;

<sup>36</sup> The inauguration of the program aided to legitimize Diem’s bid for head of state against Bao Dai. Ngo Dinh Diem—then serving as Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam—had delivered an open letter on his position against the Geneva Accords on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July. Throughout that month, the Diem’s ideals were proselytized through orchestrated meetings within administrative bodies and civil organizations which read, presented on, and discussed the open letter. Using Diem’s position against the Geneva Accords, Diem and his supporters intertwined the brewing ideals of the CDTC and the rejection of the Geneva Accords with the leadership of Diem. The early activity in studying and propagating “communist denunciation” ideals undoubtedly aided the ouster of Bao Dai and the rise of Ngo Dinh Diem to the seat of the Presidency in October of 1955.

<sup>37</sup> See CV Số 5794/GD/HV/T dated 12.31.1955, Folder No. 2744, TĐBCPNP, *Hồ Sơ về Ủy Ban Tác Động Phong trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc* regarding the implementation of a “Week of Civic Education.” Although the idea was first proposed by the former Minister of Reform, Nguyễn Đức Thuận, in December 1954, the “Week” was never implemented. Rather, materials developed for Civic Education came under the purview of the Ministry of Information and the Department of Psychological Warfare to be utilized in mobilizing the population for the National Assembly elections of 1956. The Ministry of Education was also deeply involved, and the general report to the Office of the President on the Ministry’s activities in November of 1955 details attendance at political study conferences, study sessions, and development of materials on matters related to the National Assembly elections (“Báo Cáo Tháng 11 năm 1955 về Hoạt Động của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục,” in CV Số 760-GD/BC dated 19.1.1956, Folder No. 15994, PTTDICH, *Tờ Trình Hoạt Động từ tháng 1-12.1955 của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục*). Topics—such as constitutional rights, democracy, purpose of the National Assembly—developed from the team organizing the “Week of Civic Education” found their way into the political study conducted immediately before, during, and after the elections in March. The Representative Assembly of South Vietnam, for example, studied the topics “Tìm Hiểu về Quốc Hội” (Understanding the National Assembly) (CV Số 49/NCT/TC dated 12.29.1955 in Folder No. F6-57/2425, TĐBCHNP, *Hồ Sơ về việc tuyên dương công trạng và tổ chức các buổi học tập chính trị của Ban Chỉ Đạo CDTC năm 1956*), “Chánh Trị Là Gì” (What is Politics) (CV Số 29/NCT/TC dated 1.26.1956, Folder No. F6-57/2425, TĐBCHNP), “Tinh Thần Dân Chủ” (The Spirit of Democracy) (CV Số 13/NCT/TC dated 1.16.1956, Folder No. F6-57/2425, TĐBCHNP), and “Công Dân và Quốc Hội” (Citizens and the National Assembly) (CV Số 33/NCT/TC dated 2.1.1956, Folder No. F6-57/2425, TĐBCHNP) throughout this period. Other organs studied “Quyền lợi và nhiệm vụ người dân Sứ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” (Rights and obligations of the citizen in the Republic of Vietnam) in the Ministry Education (CV Số 3161/BTT/HĐTC/BC dated 12.6.1956, Folder 3727, TQT, *Tập bản tin về học tập của ủy ban lãnh Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trung Ương, Các Bộ, Phòng Thông Tin Hoa Kỳ năm 1955-1965*; topic was previously studied in the Representative Assembly in December of 1955, see CV Số 1671-CT dated December 1955 in Folder No. F6-57/2425, TĐBCHNP), and “Quân Đội với Hiến Pháp” (The Military and the Constitution) in the Ministry of National Defense (CV Số 3161/BTT/HĐTC/BC dated 12.6.1956, Folder 3727, TQT).

materials. These documents were often newspaper selections with propagandistic commentaries. They covered international events, domestic events, and largely reported on events that were of political concerns. “Recent Events” documents would be distributed and utilized for the remainder of the Republic.<sup>38</sup>

The second period of the PSP began in 1958 during which the program underwent major structural reconfiguration. These changes were due to changing political imperatives of the regime to progressively move away from mere “communist denunciation” and towards goals of national development and international recognition. The shift in political imperatives undoubtedly were responses to the increase of American aid and presence, as well as growing demands in matters of economic viability and military expenditures. Indeed, in his Presidential Speech on 1958 National Day, Diệm made the issue of “escaping the deficient conditions of underdeveloped areas” apparent. He called upon the citizens of Vietnam to “recognize this complex reality” and to work to build the country. While accomplishments in building democratic institutions are lauded, the speech emphasized the vision forward: the economic growth of the country.<sup>39</sup> This idea of “escaping” from the “underdevelopment” of newly decolonized countries was further reinforced by the political study materials developed for 1959.<sup>40</sup>

The change came quite suddenly in the PSP and resulted in a holistic restructuring of the PSP. For one, directive leadership of the PSP moved from the Ministry of Information under Trần Chánh Thành and to that of the Office of President under the directorship of Nguyễn Đình Thuần—the Minister of the Presidency.<sup>41</sup> The Minister of Information was retained as “committee member” of the new central directing body. For another, it also modified the ideological importance of CDTC cadres by replacing CDTC Directive Committees within individual organs with a “Directive Committee for Political Study.” These new directive bodies

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<sup>38</sup> First available “Tổng Kết Tình Hình Thế Giới và Trong Nước” acquired from TTLTQGII was for 23-30 of September 1956. The distribution of “Recent News” for study was designated to the Ministry of Information in the 1958 reconfiguration of the PSP (“Chương Trình Học Tập” attachment of CV Số 105-TTP/VP dated 8.18.1958, Folder No. 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập Thời Sự, Công Dân Giáo Dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*). This task was most likely taken on by the Directorate of Information which was placed under the Ministry of the Civic Commissariat *Bộ Công Dân Vụ* in the aftermath of the reconfiguration of the regime beginning in October of 1960 (See “Chánh Phủ VNCH Gồm Có 16 Ông Bộ Trưởng,” *Saigon Mới*, 2.8.1961).

<sup>39</sup> Lê Quốc Khánh, ngày 26-10-58 Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống,” *Saigon Mới*, 10.27.1958

<sup>40</sup> The first mandatory political study document of 1959 was “The Reality of Vietnam,” which details its economic and political immaturity and need for international and development (CV Số 24/HTTU/TT dated 1.26.1959, in Folder No. 20186, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của UB Lãnh Đạo Học tập TU v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị các tài liệu số 1/59, 2/59, 5/59, 6/59 năm 1959*). In *Gió Nam*, in celebration of the Lunar New Years, the Chairman of the Union of national Revolutionary Civil Servants sent a letter to civil servants emphasizing their duties. These duties demanded that civil servants must participate in “increasing the legitimacy of the nation in the world” while aiding the economic development of the country. Restating the argument of “underdevelopment” dictated by the President’s October speech, the letter reminded civil servants that “Vietnam, although small and was deficient to other countries in matters of wealth,” had a legacy of “morality” and “culture” which must be cultivated through study (Lâm Lễ Trinh, “Lá Thơ Xuân gọi Người Bạn Công Chức,” *Gió Nam* [8] February 1959, 1-3).

<sup>41</sup> Nguyễn Đình Thuần replaced Nguyễn Hữu Châu only some 4 months prior to the changes in the PSP. He was appointed Minister of the Presidency on 13<sup>th</sup> of May, 1958 in Sắc Lệnh số 249-TTP.

were no longer led by CDTC cadres but were headed by the highest-ranking individual in each organ (i.e., the respective Minister or Director).<sup>42</sup>

Beyond these changes to the structural leadership, the 1958 reconfiguration also changed the regular operations of the PSP. First, the reconfiguration of the program organized the PSP in accordance to “study cells” at the lowest level. Second, a newly established “Directive Committee for Political Study” had the responsibility of hosting monthly assemblies in which all cells gathered to discuss and review what was previously studied. Third, the 1958 system implemented the two-ranks system. Finally, the 1958 reconfiguration also introduced new mandatory study materials into the PSP curriculum. Although many of the CDTC-era topics were listed in the 1958 policy, emphasized were study materials relating to the political-economic circumstances of Vietnam, political-economic development in foreign countries, Personalist philosophy, and the various political, economic, and social policies of the Republican government.<sup>43</sup>

In December of 1958, sessions also began the annual study of the International Declarations of Human Rights.<sup>44</sup> The President’s address on National Day *Ngày Quốc Khánh* (10/26), Double Seven Day *Ngày Song Thất (7/7)* and the annual Presidential address to the National Assembly were also made annual topics of political study.<sup>45</sup> In 1960, while themes of national development continued, political study was marked by interest in the National Liberation Front and new legal measures to combat communist infiltration dominated.<sup>46</sup> The year prior saw the increase in insurgent activities and the rewriting of several laws which resulted in harsher punishment for crimes relating to communist activities and corruption.

The last period of the PSP lasted from the beginning of 1961 until the collapse of the First Republic. During this period, the presence of Trần Chánh Thành in PSP had been eliminated; he—along with three other high-ranking officials—had resigned in October of 1960 and the Ministry of Information was disbanded and replaced with a new “General Directorate of

<sup>42</sup> “Chương Trình Học Tập” attachment of CV Số 105-TTP/VP dated 8.18.1958, PTTĐICH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> CV Số 14.444/BKT/CM dated 12.10.1958, Folder No. 20030 and “Học Tập về Bản Tuyên Ngôn Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền: Tài Liệu Số 12 ngày 6.12.58” dated 12.6.1958, Folder No. 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*.

<sup>45</sup> Study of these speeches established in “Chương Trình Học Tập” attachment of CV Số 105-TTP/VP dated 8.18.1958, Folder No. 20030. See first official study of National Day designated as Tài Liệu Số 7 distributed for mandatory study on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1958, “Hiệu Triệu Của Tổng Thống Nhân Lễ Quốc Khánh Ngày 26/10/58,” Folder No. 3031. The study of Double Seven Day actually began in 1957, though the 1958 reconfiguration established it as part of the universal PSP curriculum (CV Số 77/UBTC/QT dated 7.15.1957, Folder No. 2488, TQT, *Tập Lưu Công Văn của Ban Chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng, ban hướng dân học tập năm 1957-1958*; subsequent see Số 84-YT/VPHT dated 7.6.1960, Folder No. 3031, BYT and Folder No. 20531, PTTĐICH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961*).

<sup>46</sup> Materials for study: “8 điều nên làm và 8 điều không nên làm” in March (Folder No. 20354, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Phủ Tổng Thống, Liên Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia hướng dẫn học tập chống cộng năm 1960*), “Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam của Bọn Ác Ôn Côn Đồ Việt Cộng” and “Âm Mưu Phá Hoại của VC Trong Các Cơ Quan Đoàn Thể của Ta” in April (Folder No. 20359, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v tìm hiểu chất “Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam” năm 1960*), “Tại Sao Chống Cộng” in July (Folder No. 20354, PTTĐICH), and “Chiến Thuật Sống Chung Hòa Bình của Cộng Sản” in September (Folder No. 20357, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dẫn học tập ‘đường lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa’ năm 1960*) all dealt with issues of brewing insurgency, the need to crackdown communist operatives, and the issue of military infiltration.

Information,” supervised by the Office of the President. In explaining the replacement of these high-ranking officials and the reorganization of the Ministry of Information, the Republican government cites the need to place individuals who have diplomatic experiences in these important positions to properly represent the South Vietnamese government in the international arena.<sup>47</sup> The wholesale reconfiguration of the government did not end until February of 1961, with the formation of new ministries and governmental organs, particularly the Ministry of the Civic Commissariat which came to supervise with the Directorate of Information and Youth. For the PSP, this shift in authority over ideological dissemination and leadership is demonstrated in monthly reports sent in from various study cells of the Directorate of Police and Security. These reports were not only sent to the Minister of the Presidency (the Chairman of the Central Directorate Committee for Political Study) and the Minister of the Interior (to which the Directorate of Police and Security belonged), but also the Director of Information (Belonging to the The Ministry of the Civic Commissariat) and the “Political Advisor” to the President, Ngô Đình Nhu.<sup>48</sup> By 1963, Ngô Đình Nhu had taken a leading role in the operations of PSP, and the Directorate of Information was responsible for distributing study materials for Double Seven Day and the International Declaration of Human Rights—tasks originally taken up by Trần Chánh Thành.<sup>49</sup>

This period was marked by the dominating presence of Personalism, a growing concern towards national development, and the two-state projected orchestrated by Ngô Đình Nhu: the Strategic Hamlet *Áp Chiến Lược* and the Open Arms *Chiêu Hồi* Program. While national development followed from the reconfiguration of the PSP in 1958, these new initiatives involved military and security elements which developed following the formation of the communist-led National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam *Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam Việt Nam* and amidst intensified guerrilla activities within the countryside. Policies amplifying state control and anticommunism had been implemented by the Diệm administration throughout 1959.<sup>50</sup> However the increased deterioration of the security situation in South

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<sup>47</sup> Beginning on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, directives from Diem issued the major reorganization of the administration. Two ministries—the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior—inaugurated new ministers. The aide to the Ministry of National Defense was replaced by Nguyễn Đình Thuần, then serving head of the Office of the President. The reconfiguration of major administrative ministries is defended by the regime as responding to the need to place in positions of power individuals who could properly represent South Vietnam on the international stage. The reconfiguration was announced in Diệm’s address to the National Assembly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October (See section I “Cải Tổ Cơ Cấu” of “Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống đọc trước Quốc Hội trong buổi Khai Mạc Khóa họp thường lệ [2-10-1961]” *Giáo Nam* [38], 1-4, 16, 53-54). Trần Chánh Thành, amongst those who were replaced, acknowledged that “the reform was because the relations of the Republic of Vietnam in foreign countries is increasing, thus needed was a new cabinet which understands the situation and have experience to represent the Vietnam in different countries” quoted from “Cải Tổ Chánh Phủ Quang Trọng” *Saigon Mới*, 10.19.1960. See also “Việc Thay Đổi Thành Phần Chánh Phủ Việt Nam CH” *Saigon Mới*, 10.20.1960.

<sup>48</sup> See Folder No. 2530, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị của các đơn vị trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 5-6.1961*

<sup>49</sup> CV Số 3837-CDV/TT/VP1 dated 7.20.1963 and CV Số 153-CDV/TT/KHCT dated 9.16.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*.

<sup>50</sup> Most notorious was law 10/59 passed in May of 1959. Although emphasized as a seeming anomaly in the Vietnam War literature, the law, in fact, was part of a larger set of legal changes occurring throughout 1959. Law 9/59 signed on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April dictated that corruption in the civil administration can result in the confiscation of personal property, costing upwards of 500.000 dollars would result in imprisonment and hard labor, and costing upwards of 2 million dollars would be met with the capital punishment (“Tổng Thống đã ban hành luật số 9/59 ký

Vietnam forced Diệm in 1961 to ultimately declare a nationwide “State of Emergency.” Validated in mid-October, the measure further extended the powers of the President to unilaterally declare laws during periods of “emergency” in response to the “invasion” of communist operatives.<sup>51</sup> Within political study sessions, participants were taught of the “correct appraisal” of these increasingly draconian measures. The seriousness of the State of Emergency is explained away as “an obvious condition of any nation during an era of war” and was a “collective measure” intended to “awaken” individuals to their responsibilities to the nation.<sup>52</sup>

In 1962, Ngô Đình Nhu began sponsoring the regular training of Strategic Hamlet cadres and ensured that the program monopolized the themes of PSP study sessions.<sup>53</sup> By September of 1963, he implemented the “Strategic Area” program as a way to restructure administrative bodies in accordance with the Strategic Hamlet model.<sup>54</sup> In early 1963, Nhu and the Minister of the Civic Commissariat, Ngô Trọng Hiếu, integrated the study of Chiêu Hồi into the PSP curriculum.<sup>55</sup> Content wise, study materials developed for the Strategic Hamlet and Open Arms

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ngày 18-4-59 ấn định: Các Tội do Công Chức Vi Phạm,” *Saigon Mới*, 4.20.1959). A lieutenant in the South Vietnamese army, Trần Quốc Thái, was condemned to 5 years in prison for siphoning some 900,000 dollars of provincial funds (“Trước Tòa Đại Hình đã trả lại non 1 triệu biên thủ của tỉnh đoàn Bảo An Gia Định: Trần Quốc Thái [cựu thiếu úy] vẫn bị 5 năm cầm cố” *Saigon Mới*, 5.26.1959). Law 14/59 passed in June targeted the illegal production of goods (“Tổng Thống VNCH đã ban hành luật số 14/59 ngày 11-6-59 trừng phạt các tổ mao hóa và biến tạo các thứ sản phẩm” *Saigon Mới*, 6.15.1959) and Law 91, passed by the National Assembly on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April, established a special military court to locally try individuals engaged activities harming or threatening the security and property of the nation (“Quốc Hội đã chấp thuận dự luật 91: Lập Tòa Án Đặc Biệt,” *Saigon Mới*, 4.30.1959). Through Law 10/59—which revised and corroborated Law 91—hundreds of “communists” and other violent criminals had been executed or forced into hard labor through these military tribunals by the end of the year. Review of discovered, imprisoned, and executed “communist” operatives and criminals in 1959 as reported in *Saigon Mới* demonstrates the regularity of these occurrences and the role that the military tribunal plays. Virtually every few days, the paper reported on the activities of the military tribunal and new violators being imprisoned or executed.

<sup>51</sup> Sắc Lệnh Tuyên Bố Tình Trạng Khẩn Cấp trên toàn lãnh thổ VNCH” *Chiến Sĩ* [81], 14; the National Assembly on the 18<sup>th</sup> voted in favor of Law 13/61 (“Luật Số 13/61 do Quốc Hội biểu quyết chấp thuận ngày 18-10-1961 và Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa ban hành ngày 19-10-1961,” *Chiến Sĩ* [81], 14).

<sup>52</sup> Collated from Folder No. 20532, PTTĐICH, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11 và 12. 1961*

<sup>53</sup> Collated from *Chiến Sĩ* issues in 1962 (no. 84-93) which regularly reports the political study of its organs.

<sup>54</sup> CV Số 15595/YT/VP.HT dated 9.5.1963, Folder 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*; the initiative to create “Strategic Areas” *Khu Chiên Lược* within administrative bodies modeled on the Strategic Hamlet concept came earlier than September, though this is the first full document that illustrates the model actual implementation in a governmental organ. The “Strategic Area” was mentioned as expanding in the study of 1963’s Double Seven Day (“Ý Nghĩa Ngày Song Thất,” attachment to CV Số 4910/QT/HDHT dated 7.11.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*). By September of 1963, political study materials like the one cited here interwove speeches from Ngô Trọng Hiếu, Ngô Đình Nhu, and Trần Kim Tuyến into the study of the Strategic Hamlet. Speech from Ngô Đình Nhu for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cohort of Strategic Hamlet Cadres utilized as PSP material for The General Office of Taxation see CV Số 641-QT/HT dated 5.2.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*. Political study of speech from Trần Kim Tuyến on the Strategic Hamlet, see “Biên Bản Buổi học tập chiêu hồi thứ năm 4-4-1963 hồi 16g tại phòng họp của Nha Tổng Thư Ký Bộ Công Chánh và Giao Thông,” Folder No. 1600, BCCGT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập đề tài của Bác Sĩ Trần Kim Tuyến về vấn đề học tập năm 1963*. Strategic Hamlet integrated into the concept of “Human Rights,” see “Kỷ Niệm Tuyên Ngôn Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền 10-12-1962” attachment to CV Số 01-QT/HDHT, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*.

<sup>55</sup> The Chiêu Hồi (Open Arms) Program was initially conceived as a subsidiary of the Strategic Hamlet initiative and was led by the Ministry of the Civic Commissariat. The political study of Ngô Đình Nhu’s speech for training of Chiêu Hồi cadres in the General Office of Taxation, see CV Số 641-QT/HT dated 4.17.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT,

programs emphasized Personalist interpretations of national development. The concept of the “Strategic Hamlet,” (and its variations: “Strategic Cluster” *Khóm Chiến Lược* or “Strategic Area” *Khu Chiến Lược*) meant a refashioning of the everyday life of administrators, soldiers, and citizens. Through new “social structures” developed through the Strategic Hamlet, the Republic would socially, politically, and economically progress to a new stage of civilizational advancement, bolstered by voluntarist activities of citizens who had “revolutionized” themselves and accepted the ideals of the Personalist revolution. Similarly, the concept of the Chiêu Hồi Program was initially conceptualized, literally translated as “invitation to return.” This entailed not only the “return” of insurgent soldiers to the nation, but also by those who are already in the nation to return to its ideals.<sup>56</sup>

Towards the end of the regime, Ngô Đình Nhu utilized the PSP to defend the regime’s response to the “Buddhist Crisis” which erupted in early May 1963. Vehemently responding to international allegations of religious discrimination and human rights violations, study materials vilified the Buddhist-led opposition, justified government raids against pagodas, and defended the legitimacy of Diệm administration through the language of Personalism.<sup>57</sup> Although the state repressive response created a temporary lull in the political unrest by September, the Diệm administration had largely defaced itself internationally. Republican public announcements, rhetoric, and study materials had condemned not only its American benefactors, but also the African and Asian countries who raised the issue of human rights violation. In August, the hardline position taken by the Ngô brothers pushed the Americans to ultimately withdraw their support for the regime, and domestic support for Diệm and his brother was also clearly waning.<sup>58</sup> By September, the United States and oppositional military leaders were already planning the removal of Diem and his brother from the seat of power.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, a military coup led by Lieutenant General Dương Văn Minh stormed the Independence Palace. The brothers Diệm and Nhu initially escaped to Chợ Lớn and sought refuge in Cha Tâm Catholic Church. The brothers were captured the next day and executed in the back of an armored vehicle. The swift coup effectively ended 9 years of rule under the Diem presidency and marked a monumental shift in political and ideological power.

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*Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963.* The topic of “Quan Niệm Đấu Tranh và Vấn Đề ‘Chiêu Hồi Ta’” was studied with materials that entailed excerpt of speeches delivered by Ngô Trọng Hiếu and Ngô Đình Nhu (CV Số 15595/YT/VP.HT dated 9.5.1963, Folder 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*)

<sup>56</sup> Huấn Thị của Ông Cố Vấn Chính Trị Nhân Dịp Lễ Bế Giảng Khóa II Chiêu Hồi Tại Học Viện Quốc Gia Hành Chánh Ngày 16.3.63” in Số 641/QT/HT dated 5.2.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*

<sup>57</sup> CV Số 4020-QT/HDHT dated 6.6.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT which utilizes internal documents from the Republican Youth—headed by Ngô Đình Nhu—as study materials to defend the Regime against criticisms of its handling fo the crisis. PSP sessions also studied a statement made by the President on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July initiatives to deal with the crisis (Unnumbered CV from The General Office of Taxation, “chương trình học tập đề tài: ‘Bản Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống ngày 18/7/1963’” dated 7.31.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT), the press release given by the Joint Ministerial Committee formed to engage in dialogue with Buddhist Leaders on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August (Số 5953-QT/HDHT dated 8.19.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT and CV Số 14214-YT/VPHT dated 8.14.1963, Folder 3031, BYT), and the statement given by the Government on the Buddhist Crisis on 21<sup>st</sup> of August (CV ố 6179-QT/HDHT dated 8.29.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT).

<sup>58</sup> Multiple South Vietnamese officials had resigned from office since August including the Foreign Minister Vũ Văn Mẫu, the South Vietnamese ambassador in Washington Trần Văn Chương, and a large number of college educators in Huế and Saigon. Moreover, Ngô Đình Nhu was secretly attempting to reach a ceasefire with the North to remove the presence of American pressure in the South.

The various organs controlled by the Cần Lao Party were wiped from the political landscape which effectively eliminated the network of monitoring and propaganda once relied on by Diệm's regime. In the attempt to exorcise the foundations of the former regime, the new military-led government under Dương Văn Minh had disbanded key political organs by January, including the CLP, the NRM and the Women's Solidarity Movement led by Madame Nhu. The National Assembly, politically controlled by the CLP throughout the First Republic, was also dismantled and the Republican Constitution of 1956 was shredded.

*The Interregnum Period (1964-1967)*

After the collapse of the First Republic, South Vietnam underwent a period of political upsurge and civil unrest which, on the one hand, demonized the authoritarian nature of the Diệm administration and, on the other hand, pushed for democratic reforms, social justice, and civil liberties. During this period, the Republic further experienced political instability, the expansion of war, the entry of American combat troops in South Vietnam, and the deterioration of the South Vietnamese economy. For the 20-months between the collapse of the First Republic and the establishment of the military "Directorate" Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia led by Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, state-orchestrated political study activities were virtually non-existent. This, in part, was due to inconsistent national leadership within the Republican state. However, perhaps more accurately, political instability was a byproduct of widespread disillusionment with virtually all forms of state-led activities. While the First Republic was demonized as an authoritarian regime, its president—Ngô Đình Diệm—as a dictator, and former state leaders as "vestiges of the Cần Lao Party" *du đảng Cần Lao*, the prevalent demand for "True Democracy and Freedom" *Tự Do Dân Chủ Thật Sự* of the period served as a civil societal mobilization platform which was presented in contrast to the perceived totalitarianism of the Diệm administration. Situated within this political context, the ideological work of the First Republic, such as the PSP, amounted to state-orchestrated brainwashing and ideological manipulation—"putrid" activities that heralds of the "November Revolution" vowed to forever excise from Republican life.

Like other ideological programs that stemmed from the First Republic, the PSP was heavily denounced by newspapers and emerging civil societal leaders.<sup>59</sup> In one editorial from the time, political study activities under the First Republic were described as "sessions [which] were usually stretched out with complicated phrases making those who attend bored and tired—yawning here, yawning there—just hoping to exit the meeting room so they could breathe in open air...but once they exit, they know no more than when they entered."<sup>60</sup> In another editorial, the CDTC and affiliated political study are deemed distasteful during which Republican citizens wasted "countless millions of hours studying how to curse Ho Chi Minh and his henchmen, all the while everyday signing and presenting proposals to worship 'President Ngo, the virtuous leader of the nation.'" Accordingly, these activities served to create "a putrid and broken national

<sup>59</sup> One early example is poignant. During a general meeting in January 1964 of the "Council of Sages"—a non-elected assembly composed of society's "notables" charged with advising the administration of Dương Văn Minh—the agenda issued that the members "dissect" two speeches from the government, then get together for a general meeting, and finally develop "a number of issues for examination during the discussion." Council members rejected the procedure stating, "We cannot engage in political study through these two speeches as if it was still during the period of the Ngo Dynasty" ("Hội Đồng Nhân Sĩ Phân Tách 2 Bài Diễn Văn" *Tự Do*, Jan. 15, 1964).

<sup>60</sup> Phi Thường (Prodigious), "Những cái hay dở của chế độ cũ," *Tự Do*, Feb. 6, 1964

machine,” and practices of cursing the enemy and articulating “atrocities” were merely strategies to “hide that empty canister” that is the former regime.<sup>61</sup> Isolated attempts to reutilize PSP methods during the period faced strong negative reactions as well. One case of “compulsory ‘political studies’” in Duy Xuyên, Quảng Nam Province, in July of 1964, for example, led to near universal condemnation in the South Vietnamese press and further attempts in the region were effectively shut down by the Ministry of the Interior after a lengthy investigation.<sup>62</sup> Another example came in late September when concerned civil servants distributed an open letter articulating opposition to planned resumption of political study sessions in the Central Region.<sup>63</sup>

To say the least, the idea of political study was not particularly popular after the First Republic. Despite popular opposition to political study practices and the like, some attempts by various administrators were made to inaugurate the Program but faced considerable resistance. The inauguration of the PSP, thus, did not occur until the establishment of the Directorate. In June 1965, South Vietnam returned to military rule after four successive administrations which were toppled to either protests or coup. Nguyễn Cao Kỳ seized the premiership serving as the “Executive Commissioner” *Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Hành Pháp Trung Ương* of the Directorate-led military regime, and, as one of first initiatives of the new administration, the PSP was formally reinstated just a month into Directorate rule. The revival of the Program came alongside various other initiatives by the new military administration designed to stabilize the South Vietnamese society, exert state control, and eliminate all forms of social and political ills. Measures undertaken by the new administration pointed to attempts to revamp the anticommunist war effort both domestically and internationally.<sup>64</sup> Refashioned as a “Discussion Movement” *Phong*

<sup>61</sup> Dân Tộc, “Làm Cách Nào để Tránh Vết xe cũ,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 21-27, 1964.

<sup>62</sup> During these chaotic riots led by students and Buddhists, Phạm Kim Anh was held hostage for several days by avenging protestors. “Student Mob Protests,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 9, 1964; “S. Vietnam Troops Fail to Free Army Officer,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 3, 1964.

<sup>63</sup> The piece argued that it was “as if we are once again living under the forced and dark days from before, always being brainwashed, tested, praising and condemning wildly not getting anything done.” The letter requested that the administration “avoid...the old tire marks” of the old regime and not resume “9 years of study under the Ngô Dynasty [which] only brought about horrible consequences: making the civil servants question all forms of doctrine, the useless discussions.” “Tác phong ‘nhà Ngô’ sắp tái sinh: Hội họp, học taappj, hoan hô, đã đảo!” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 28, 1964; “Nguyễn vọng của một số công chức Huế,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 2, 1964.

<sup>64</sup> Alongside cessation of diplomatic relations with France, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ implemented price controls, an extended curfew, declared the banning of all newspapers in the Saigon for a month, enacted austerity measures, and warned against protests and demonstrations (“Kỳ New Saigon Premier,” *New York Times*, Jun 19, 1965; “Saigon Official Calls for ‘War Government.’” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 14, 1965; “Saigon Drops Paris, Proclaims Full War,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 25, 1965; “Viets Break With France, Warn Saigon Under Siege,” *Boston Globe*, Jun 25, 1965; “War Curbs,” *The Sun*, Jun 25, 1965; “South Vietnam Ends Ties With Paris, Charging Aid to Enemies,” *New York Times*, Jun 25, 1965). Kỳ went after prostitution which proliferated after the increase of American servicemen earlier in the year (“SAIGON BARS DATING WITH AMERICANS,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 25, 1965). He set up a firing squad posts and sandbags were set up in the city center, next to Bến Thành Market, to publicly execute those who were deemed communists, speculators, and war profiteers (“Saigon Sets Up Firing Squad Posts in Crackdown,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 17, 1965; “Saigon Orders Profiteers And Terrorists Executed,” *New York Times*, Jun 17, 1965; “Viet Terrorist Executed by Firing Squad,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 22, 1965). A number of South Vietnamese envoys were dismissed from their ambassadorship for engaging in alleged corruption, holding political ideals contrary to the administration, or encouraging gambling and other social ills (“KHANH BEING OUSTED AS VIET ROVING ENVOY,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 7, 1965; “Saigon Sacks Khanh, 3 Other Generals,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 8, 1965). Kỳ enacted a new draft program which ceased exemption for those holding secondary school



*Trào Hội Thảo*—to avoid attribution to the authoritarianism of the “old regime”—the revived PSP was utilized during the Directorate Era as a mechanism to reinforce the political legitimacy of the Thiệu-Kỳ administration, allowing the military to seize the mantle of “revolution” and democracy, mobilize an increasingly apathetic population for anticommunist activities and war, and construct a modicum of “national solidarity” to stave off political unrest.<sup>65</sup> Like the PSP of the First Republic, the new “Discussion Program” was a means of indoctrination and propaganda to ensure that soldiers, civil servants, and the general population “better understand the direction and policies of the nation and the responsibility of every cadre, every citizen.”<sup>66</sup>

The structural and theoretical components of the “Discussion Movement” differed very little from the PSP of the First Republic. Conceptualized by the administration as an “activity of collective study,” the “discussion session” had the purpose of developing thoughts, skills, and work habits in accordance with the “ideals and policies of the nation.” To ensure that this vision of “collective study” is properly enacted, each administrative organ was to establish a “Discussion Committee” *Ban Hội Thảo* composed of the organ’s administrative head and “capable personnel” responsible for the organization and planning of discussion sessions. Like the PSP of the First Republic, each discussion session would entail a presider, a presenter, and secretary. Each month, study materials would alternate between “general topics” and “specialization” topics. A “Directive Committee for Study Materials” was formed at the government center composed of representatives from the Executive Commissioner Office, the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Psychological Warfare, the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Education. And like the Ministry of Information during the First Republic, the Ministry of Psychological Warfare would be responsible for the publication and distribution of “general materials,” national oversight of the “Discussion Movement,” and collation of monthly reports by the various governmental organs for records.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike the First Republic, however, there was a notable lack of focus on selection and training for those who could serve as presenters and presidors of sessions. The central directive body of the Discussion Movement, in large part, did not interfere with the political study functions of individual organs. Although sessions were expected to be properly organized (with presidors, presenters, and secretaries as well as ensuring that study materials were handed out prior to sessions), the new central body adopted largely an oversight role which allowed peripheral organs a degree of autonomy in the selection of study materials and organization of sessions.<sup>68</sup>

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degrees, professors under the age of 30, and undergraduates who had poor school records (“Lodge Begins Duties, Meets With Viet Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 26, 1965). And in August, Kỳ embarked on a diplomatic mission to a number of Southeast Asian countries to solidify his international presence and call for cooperation in the anticommunist war (“Ky Battles View People Are Losing Control at Saigon,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 8, 1965; “S. Vietnam Chief to Tour Far East,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 21, 1965; “GROWTH ALLIANCE PROPOSED BY KY,” *New York Times*, Aug 23, 1965; “ASIAN PACT URGED BY KY,” *The Sun*, Aug 16, 1965).

<sup>65</sup> “War Apathy Seen In South Viet Nam,” *Boston Globe*, Jul 19, 1965.

<sup>66</sup> CV 44-UBHP/CT dated 7/3/1965 in TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*.

<sup>67</sup> CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965, TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*.

<sup>68</sup> Scheduling under the Discussion Movement, for example, was relatively lax and left to the discretion of local organs. When initially revived, the “Discussion Movement” directed by the Ministry of Psychological Warfare dictated that 1.5 hours be devoted weekly to political study (3493/BTLC/VP dated 6/25/1965, PTTVNCH 29589, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*). This requirement was later

Political study during the Kỳ administration focused primarily on building legitimacy for military rule and the administration's deliverance of the democratic promise. Legitimacy of military rule was built, on the one hand, the reutilization of key ideological tenets from previous administrations creating a sense of ideological continuity around the anticommunist war and the development of the nation. Indeed, political themes and rhetoric that can be traced back to the Communist Denunciation Campaign of the First Republic such as communist infiltration, the practice of communist denunciation, the South Vietnamese rejection of the Geneva Accords, the vision of national revolution and even aspects of Personalism resurfaced in study documents. Also similar to the PSP of the First Republic, speeches from the national leadership—particularly Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ—transcribed and made into mandatory study materials.<sup>69</sup>

On the other hand, discussion materials also justified military rule by emphasizing political, social, and economic achievements made under military rule. Study documents reconstructed the recent history of “political chaos” which hampered the war effort since 1963, pointed to the political stability following the return to military rule and emphasized the role of the military in building democracy in South Vietnam.<sup>70</sup> The state's focus on “democracy” was particularly intensified following the outbreak of the “Struggle Movement” in the central region during the spring and summer of 1966. While demonizing the Buddhist-led insurgency as a

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reduced to a mandatory of 2 sessions per month, each session lasting no more than 2 hours (CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726). This was similarly implemented in the military (11062 QP/QS/NC dated 11/2/1965, PTTVNCH 29589, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*). In peripheral provinces, like the 4<sup>th</sup> Tactical Zone, study sessions were only scheduled once per month (496/ĐBCP/CT dated 4/16/1966, PTTVNCH 29589, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*). There was little emphasis on the need for materials utilized in one organ to be similar to another organ. And propagandistic activities, for the most part, were emphasized during national holidays such as the Day of National Resentment and National Day.

<sup>69</sup> In October and November, study documents entailed propagandistic reports of military victories by the South Vietnamese Army, speeches from Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, and a historiographic account of events leading up to the formation of the new military administration since the November Revolution to commemorate National Day on November 1<sup>st</sup> (“Thông điệp của Thiếu Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Hành Pháp Trung Ương,” “Quân Đội Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đã bẻ gãy chiến dịch mùa mưa của Việt Cộng,” and “Toàn Dân Đoàn Kết Nhất Trí,” attached to CV 7285 QT/HDHT dated 10/2/1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726). See also “Hiệu Triệu của TT Chủ Tịch UBLDQG gửi đồng bào nhân ngày Quốc Khánh 1-11-1965” and “Đại Hội Toàn Quân ngày 11-9-65 và vấn đề thành thủ nhân tâm,” (CV 04/HĐHDTL/PG dated 12/23/1965, *Báo Cáo tổng kết tình hình hội thảo toàn quốc tháng 11/1965*, PTTVNCH 29416).

<sup>70</sup> For example, in November of 1965, to celebrate National Day, study materials reinforced the administration's commitment to matters democracy and enacting the promises inherent in the November Revolution. Notably, this study document crafts the 20 months after the prior to Directorate rule as a period of “chaos in every matter of politics, military, economics, and diplomacy.” This chaos was blamed, firstly, on rivaling political entities who utilized “demagogy to compete for power and positions.” Secondly, it resulted from communist exploitation of the deteriorating political condition to manipulate the real yearnings of the people. Indeed, what resulted was a political environment in which “every effort [from the state] never amounted to anything because every case of taking it to the streets was a political event that determined the fate of an administration.” The state of domestic politics had real repercussion on the front lines as guerrilla efforts made gains in major areas in the South. According to the study document, the 19<sup>th</sup> of June marked the beginning of reversal in these trends as “the military, the vanguard of the November Revolution, once again stepped forward to lead the state and the people had completed that revolution.” To realize the promise of the November, it was necessary for the military to step in to seize power in order to ensure that a “positive social revolution” would be accomplished (“Từ cách mạng chính trị 1/11/63 đến cách mạng xã hội 1/11/65,” attached to CV 8277-QT/HDHT, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726).

communist ploy, study documents directed the discussion of democracy away from the history mobilization by civil societal groups following the collapse of the First Republic and towards the “democratic achievements” made by the military leadership. As measures for general elections and foundational institutions for democratic participation were laid, the military regime seized upon these initiatives as “achievements” to bolster its rule. In study materials, measures toward democracy originated not from any demands by groups within the Republican civil society but were rather evidence of the military’s “goodwill” *thiện chí* and deliverance on the promise of democracy in South Vietnam.<sup>71</sup>

Under the Discussion Movement, the Psychological Warfare Ministry also issued study documents focusing on commemoration the dynastic Vietnamese heroes Trần Hưng Đạo and Lê Lợi,<sup>72</sup> the International Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>73</sup> the New Life Hamlet,<sup>74</sup> the Honolulu Conference,<sup>75</sup> importance of elections and electoral procedures,<sup>76</sup> the Second Republican Constitution,<sup>77</sup> International Worker’s Day (May Day),<sup>78</sup> and comparative study of different

<sup>71</sup> “Xây Dựng Dân Chủ,” in CV 5115-BTTCH/CTTL/ST2 dated 5/12/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577.

<sup>72</sup> “Tuồng niêm và tri ân anh hùng liệt sĩ, toàn dân đoàn kết, cương quyết chống Trung Cộng xâm lăng,” cited in CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589; full-text found in CV 6856-QT/HDHT dated 9/16/1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965* TQT 3726; “Thần Thế và Sự Nghiệp của TRẦN HƯNG ĐẠO và LÊ LỢI” cited in CV 6856-QT/HDHT dated 9/16/1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726

<sup>73</sup> “Tuyên Ngôn Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền” in CV 9.401-QT/HDHT dated 12/14/1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726.

<sup>74</sup> Similar to the Strategic Hamlet initiative before it, the framing of the New Life Hamlet took on developmental overtones, with aspects reflecting the Personalist message of the First Republic. Alongside the stated goal of “exterminating communist sleeper agents,” the study document also sought to “create a new spirit” in the sense of cultivating moralistic habits and humanistic Confucian virtues such as “dân, nghĩa, lễ, trí, tín” *people, significance, ceremony, aptitude, and trustworthiness*. Like the goals of the First Republic, the New Life Hamlet sought to establish democratic practices and institutions at the village level. Unlike the Strategic Hamlet envisioned by Ngô Đình Nhu and Republican Personalism, however, these rural-based democratic foundations were not projected to spread from the villages to the urban centers (“Đường Lối Xây Dựng Nông Thôn Trong Năm 1967,” attached to CV 034/HĐHDTL/VPĐH dated 3/29/1967, PTTVNCH 29737, *Báo cáo học tập tại Nha Quảng Trị Nhân viên về đường lối xây dựng nông thôn trong năm 1967*).

<sup>75</sup> “Hội Nghị Honolulu, một thắng lợi ngoại giao của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” was assigned in February 1966 (CV 159/BTTCH-CTTL dated 4/7/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577. Scheduling of Honolulu-related study sessions found in “Bảng Đức Kết Chi Tiết Tình Hình Hội Thảo Toàn Quốc trong tháng 2-1966” attached to CV 159/BTTCH-CTTL dated 4/7/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577; For the 21<sup>st</sup> of Feb., Đoàn Thêm writes: “Buổi sớm, họp báo tại nhà Diên Hồng; buổi chiều mệt tinh hội thảo tại vườn Dinh Độc Lập, nhân “ngày Xã Hội Mới” nói về kết quả hội nghị Honolulu và xác nhận ý chí chống Cộng cùng xây dựng nông thôn và dân chủ,” p. 34, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*; full text of study materials found in newspapers: “Bài Diễn văn của Thiệu Tướng Ng. Cao Kỳ (đọc trong buổi họp báo hồi 9 giờ sáng thứ hai 21-2-66 tại Hội Đồng Diên Hồng)” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 23, 1966; “Diễn Văn của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch UBLĐQG (Đọc tại Dinh Độc Lập chiều thứ hai 21-2-66, nhân “ngày Xã Hội Mới”)” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 24, 1966.

<sup>76</sup> “Đoàn Kết chuẩn bị quốc hội lập hiến xây dựng dân chủ, chiến thắng cộng sản” attached to CV 7518-BTTCH/CTTL/PG dated 7/14/1966, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656

<sup>77</sup> “Hiến Pháp Việt Nam Cộng Hòa,” attached to CV 29634/TBTTCH/HĐHDTL/STI dated 5/24/1967, in PTTVNCH 29738, *Tài liệu của Ủy Ban Hành Pháp TW v/v tổ chức các cuộc hội thảo năm 1967*.

<sup>78</sup> “Ý nghĩa và lịch sử ngày Quốc Tế Lao Động,” attached to CV 3031/TBTTCH/KHTLC/STI dated 4/24/1967, PTTVNCH 29738, *Tài liệu của Ủy Ban Hành Pháp TW v/v tổ chức các cuộc hội thảo năm 1967*.

types of regimes.<sup>79</sup> Mandatory study materials were also developed for key holidays, particularly the “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận* (July 20)<sup>80</sup> and National Day *Ngày Quốc Khánh* (Nov. 1).<sup>81</sup> Each of these materials reemphasized the importance of the anticommunist war and the achievements of the military-led democratic reforms.

The National Assembly and Presidential elections of 1967 which inaugurated the Second Republic were, in many ways, a culmination of the political upsurge and civil societal activism that spanned across the Republican Interregnum. A point of historical climax that would determine the political future of the Vietnamese Republican nation, these elections

During these elections, the military ticket of Thiệu and Kỳ utilized political study to advertise its election platform for economic and political progress, citing the successes of these policies under military rule.<sup>82</sup> More importantly, the PSP proselytized the military ticket’s

<sup>79</sup> “So sánh 3 chế độ cộng sản, Ngô Đình Diệm và Quốc Gia,” cited in CV 04/HĐHDTL/PG dated 12/23/1965, *Báo cáo tổng kết tình hình hội thảo toàn quốc tháng 11/1965*, PTTVNCH 29416.

<sup>80</sup> During the week leading up the second commemoration of the Day of National Resentment (July 20) in 1965, study materials reemphasized familiar anticommunist themes: the atrocities of the communists, the communist violation of the Geneva Accords, and the communist infiltration of the South which had sparked the war. The same study materials further deployed idea of the “Northward March” to mobilize support for Kỳ’s “Front to Liberate the North”—an organization he had first created back in May. According to one study document, the “Front to Liberate the North” was a “necessary measure” to ensure victory and laid within “our holistic and enduring people’s Revolution.” As the administration perceived it, the project to “exterminate the communists” cannot be simply isolated to the South but must be one that militarily engaged the Communist North within its own territory. The assigned study materials justified Kỳ’s 26-point program by articulating this program through a new vision of “social revolution” which sought to “increase the living standards of the entire citizenry beginning with the lowest level upward.” Drawing partly on the Personalist message of the First Republic, Kỳ’s program is situated as a strategic measure within the anticommunist war as well as a response to the “human demand for continuous progress.” This progress would be achieved both materially and spiritually because “we recognize that humans are not mere machinery” and seek to protect “the noble spiritual value of human beings” (“Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng miền Nam, giải phóng miền Bắc,” dated 7/20/1965, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT 3031; CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965; “Tuyên Ngôn của Chính Phủ Nhân ngày 20-7-1965,” *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm “ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1965*, PTTVNCH 29400); Subsequent study documents on holiday: “Đoàn Kết chuẩn bị quốc hội lập hiến xây dựng dân chủ, chiến thắng cộng sản” attached to CV 7518-BTTCH/CTTL/PG dated 7/14/1966, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656; “ÔN ĐỊNH HẬU PHƯƠNG ĐỀ CHIẾN THẮNG CỘNG SẢN VÀ XÂY DỰNG DÂN CHỦ,” in CV 12-BTTCH/VP/PHĐ/PG dated 6/24/1966, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656. Organizational documents for 1967 Day of National Resentment: “Kế Hoạch Tâm Lý Chiến Ngày 20/7/67” attached to 2942/UBĐHTLC/TU dated 7/3/1967, in PTTVNCH 29720, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm “Ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1967*.

<sup>81</sup> Từ cách mạng chính trị 1/11/63 đến cách mạng xã hội 1/11/65,” attached to CV 8277-QT/HDHT, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726. “Quốc Khánh 1-11-1966” attached to 023-HĐHDTL/VPĐH/PG dated 10/20/1966, *Tổ Chức lễ Quốc Khánh năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29572; other study materials included speeches from Thiệu: “Nhất Lệnh của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia gọi toàn thể quân lực Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày Quốc Khánh 1.11.66,” “Hiệu triệu đồng bào của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia Nhân Ngày Quốc Khánh 1-11-1966,” *Tổ Chức lễ Quốc Khánh năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29572.

<sup>82</sup> PSP activity during this period was drafted around the state’s “Greater Solidarity” Program which pushed for a vision of national unity between the South Vietnamese citizenry, the administration, and the military around adamant anticommunism. Pointing to the chaos of recent years, study documents argued that such was the result of “poisonous disunity” which had placed South Vietnam at the verge of political collapse. To combat such a possibility, the Greater Solidary Program sought to “reconcile” the political and ideological differences within the nation, integrate rebels who joined the Struggle Movement back into the fold of the nation, expand the Open Arms Program to facilitate guerrilla defections, and generate a robust and nationwide war effort which was to be led by the military state. Strategically, the Greater Solidarity Program emphasized the political education of governmental

position on the matter of peace and negotiations—the dominating issue of the 1967 elections. Unlike leading civilian candidates who each called—in one way or another—for direct negotiations with the communist enemy to bring an end to the war, the military ticket of Thiệu and Kỳ maintained a hardline position on the war,<sup>83</sup> emphasizing “final victory” and placed the “cessation of communist infiltration” as the primary condition for any negotiations.<sup>84</sup>

### *The Second Republic (1967-1975)*

Political study following the formation of the Second Republic of Vietnam no longer emphasized the legitimacy of military rule and rather reflected a primary focus on the position of South Vietnam at the negotiation table in Paris. Most important was the prospect of peace and the transition of military duties to South Vietnamese forces. The Thiệu administration pushed themes of “self-reliance” *tự lực tự cường* and “self-sufficiency” *tự túc*, attempting to convert the loss of American support for the war into an opportunity for South Vietnamese “self-determination” *tự quyết*. Built on the familiar theme of national revolution and economic development, “self-reliance” and “self-determination” under Thiệu meant the development of South Vietnam’s military capabilities, domestic economic production, and political prestige on the international stage as well as internal stability.<sup>85</sup> This message sought to combat the daunting

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workers and military personnel through study sessions and redirecting of political discourse through media control and cultural production. Economically, study documents articulated a program for “economic affluence and social justice for the entirety of the people.” Drawing on the Directorate’s economic programs since May of 1966, the document demonstrates a litany of achievements under the Thiệu-Kỳ administration including the expansion of unions, trade-based training, new jobs from foreign investments, and social welfare in matters of food distribution, housing, family support, and wages (“Ý Nghĩa và lịch sử ngày Quốc Tế lao động 1.5” and “Đại Cương và chương trình lao động của Nội Các Chiến Tranh 1967,” attached to CV 3031/TBTTCH/KHTLC dated 4/24/1967, *Tài liệu của Ủy ban hành pháp tw v/v tổ chức các cuộc hội thảo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29738).

<sup>83</sup> The military’s position on the war: South Vietnam was fighting a righteous war for survival. Prior to any negotiations, the military administration demanded a complete withdrawal of communist forces from South Vietnam, the retention of American troops, complete “guarantee” of South Vietnam’s national sovereignty and security, and objected to any discussion with the communist guerrillas.

<sup>84</sup> “Kế hoạch tâm lý chiến ngày 20/7/67,” *Tổ Chức lễ kỷ niệm “Ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720

<sup>85</sup> “Làm thế nào để tự lực cánh sinh,” attached to CV 4543/BTT/NHK/NCKH dated 11/17/1969, PTTVNCH 30271: *Báo cáo của các Phủ, Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập chính trị năm 1969*; “LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ TỰ TÚC,” attached to CV 3036/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 8/10/1970, PTTVNCH 30450: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về đẩy mạnh bình định yểm trợ tiền tuyến tự phòng có hậu phương bền vững tự túc tự quân và tự chế năm 1970*; “LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ TỰ QUÂN” attached to CV 3112/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 8/17/1970, PTTVNCH 30450: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về đẩy mạnh bình định yểm trợ tiền tuyến tự phòng có hậu phương bền vững tự túc tự quân và tự chế năm 1970*; “LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ TỰ PHÒNG” attached to CV 3212/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 8/21/1970, PTTVNCH 30450: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về đẩy mạnh bình định yểm trợ tiền tuyến tự phòng có hậu phương bền vững tự túc tự quân và tự chế năm 1970*; “TẠI SAO TA PHẢI TỰ CHẾ VÀ LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ TỰ CHẾ,” attached to CV 3628/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 9/21/1970, PTTVNCH 30450: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về đẩy mạnh bình định yểm trợ tiền tuyến tự phòng có hậu phương bền vững tự túc tự quân và tự chế năm 1970*; “CHƯƠNG TRÌNH PHÁT TRIỂN KINH TẾ CỦA VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA,” attached to CV 3770/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 9/30/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “Tiết Kiệm Để Đẩy Mạnh Sản Xuất,” attached to CV 919/BTT/BT dated 3/19/1971, PTTVNCH 31331: *Tài liệu học tập v/v thực thi chính sách tiết kiệm, đẩy mạnh sản xuất, tận diệt tham nhũng, củng cố chế độ năm 1971-1974*; “ĐẨY MẠNH KẾ HOẠCH CỘNG ĐỒNG TỰ VỆ - CỘNG ĐỒNG PHÁT TRIỂN ĐỊA PHƯƠNG ĐỂ KIẾN TẠO HÒA BÌNH VÀ THỊNH VƯỢNG,” attached to CV 1280/BTT/UBTTĐC dated 4/27/1971, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “TẠI SAO TA PHẢI TỰ CHẾ VÀ LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ TỰ CHẾ,” at. To

prospect of national collapse and defeat brought about by the inevitability of American departure. The message not only sought to assuage wavering public confidence, but also rhetorically deflect calls for the establishment of a new government that would include the legal participation of the NLF. Premised on familiar themes of South Vietnamese anti-neutralism, study sessions pointed to historical cases of communist duplicity, violence, and deception as lessons against any form of collaboration.<sup>86</sup> As the Paris conferences came to a close, study materials retrieved the South Vietnamese narrative on the Geneva Accords to warn of the inevitability of communist violation of ceasefire and sought to prepare the citizenry for the resumption of violence.<sup>87</sup>

The ideological reach of the PSP was greatly expanded under the Second Republic. This expansion was primarily catalyzed by the catastrophe of the Tết Offensive and the ensuing political consequences.<sup>88</sup> By the second half 1968, the Thiệu administration faced the real and controversial prospects of American withdrawal and direct negotiations with the communist enemy. In light of these developments, the Ministry of Information began pushing for an intensified ideological effort that could properly ensure the masses would “thoroughly grasp the

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361/PThT/BC2 dated 7/3/1971 (booklet number 11, after 7,8 was distributed in September 1971), PTTVNCH 30670: *Tổ chức các buổi học tập thông tin đại chúng tại Phủ Thủ Tướng năm 1970-1971*.

<sup>86</sup> “tại sao chưa có hòa bình?” attached to CV 1758/TNTTBC/NHK/YT/BT, PTTVNCH 29918: *Tổ chức các buổi học tập, hội thảo về quân dịch, hòa bình, than nhũng, tổ chức chính quyền cộng sản, hiến tình vnch năm 1968*; “Không liên hiệp với cộng sản,” “Không liên hiệp với cộng sản” in NVKQG 299, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Nha Giám Đốc Văn Khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia, các đơn vị trực thuộc nha về học tập chính trị năm 1969*; directive for political study, see 2958/UBCDHTU/TU dated 7/30/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*; “Tình Hình và Nhiệm vụ trong giai đoạn hiện tại,” attached to CV 2064/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 12/26/1969, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*; “Thế Đứng của Chúng Ta Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại,” attached to CV 684/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 2/24/1970, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*; “Mưu đồ của Cộng Sản trong việc đánh chiếm cánh đồng chum ở Ai Lao,” attached to CV 1086/BTT/NHR/ĐVCT/HT dated 3/21/1970, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*; “Thừa thắng xông lên tiêu diệt hết bọn cộng sản bán nước” attached to CV 2451/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 6/29/1970, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*; “Làm Thế Nào để thực hiện được một nền hòa bình công chính và trường cửu?” attached to CV 2593/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 7/8/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “Cộng Sản Phá Hoại Hòa Bình Như Thế Nào?” attached to CV 2746/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 7/16/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “Tại Sao Ta Phải Chống Cộng Đến Kỳ Cùng” attached to CV 4384/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 11/13/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “TẠI SAO CHÚNG TA CHỦ TRƯỞNG 4 KHÔNG?” attached to CV 2601/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 8/18/1971, BYT 3031: *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*; “HIỆN TÌNH ĐẤT NƯỚC TRƯỚC CUỘC XÂM LĂNG TRẮNG TRỌN CỦA CỘNG SẢN BẮC VIỆT,” attached to CV 1611/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 5/29/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*;

<sup>87</sup> “Vấn Đề Hòa Bình và Ngừng Bắn,” attached to CV 3277/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 10/31/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

<sup>88</sup> “Sau biến cố đầu Xuân Mậu Thân, kế hoạch công tác Tâm Lý Chiến trong khuôn khổ Ủy Ban cứu trợ nhân dân đã được các Tỉnh, Thị thi hành chu đáo và đạt được thành quả khả quan,” CV 2239/UBĐHTLC dated 9/26/1968, PTTVNCH 29918: *Tổ chức các buổi học tập, hội thảo về quân dịch, hòa bình, than nhũng, tổ chức chính quyền cộng sản, hiến tình vnch năm 1968*.

ideological contents [of the state] to build their standpoint, unify their will, and determinately stand behind the Government in all policies.”<sup>89</sup>

In the push for more robust information programs, in April of 1968, the Ministry of Information made mandatory political study of Thiệu’s speeches alongside statements made by top officials of the regime. Study sessions emphasized the dire situation of the nation following the Tết Offensive, focused on the regime’s position on peace and negotiations, and dove particularly into specifics how the Republic would negotiate at the Paris conference, demands it would make, and balance its political rhetoric of “peace” in the context of intensified mobilization for war.<sup>90</sup> Subsequently, in November of 1968, the regime waged a nationwide campaign requiring study of Thiệu’s speech on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November before the National Assembly.<sup>91</sup> The administration directed governmental organs and civil society groups alike to draft resolutions in support of Thiệu’s position on peace which condemned communist infiltration in the South, opposed all forms of neutralism and joint government with communist parties, and promised unity and collaboration with the government to combat communism.<sup>92</sup>

Upon this momentum, February of 1969 began a process of holistic reconfiguration of political study that would not be completed until April of 1970. Then under the Premiership of Trần Văn Hương, various meetings were held between multiple ministries (with representatives from the Department of Psychological Warfare, the Ministry of Information, the Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Education and JUSPAO) to discuss the direction of Informational strategies and political study. After several months of inter-ministerial debates, the Ministry of Information scrapped the existing “Discussion Movement” and implemented instead a structure similar to what existed during the era of the Communist Denunciation Campaign.<sup>93</sup> The central body, renamed the “Central Directive Committee for Political Study” *Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương*, was chaired by the Minister of Information and included representatives from familiar participants such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of

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<sup>89</sup> “Nhu cầu cấp bách này của Quốc Gia đặt ra cho ngành Thông Tin một trách vụ vô cùng nặng nề là làm thế nào cho toàn dân, toàn quân quán triệt nội dung tư tưởng để kiên định lập trường, thống nhất ý chí, cương quyết hậu thuẫn cho Chính Phủ trong mọi chủ trương chính sách.... Mọi cán bộ Thông Tin phải thấu triệt lập trường của Chính Phủ để bất cứ trong trường hợp nào cũng có thể giải thích, giải đáp thảo đáng các thắc mắc của dân chúng, mọi người dân đều biết và hiểu rõ lập trường của Chính Phủ, vì chính đó là tiêu biểu lập trường chung của toàn dân,” (CV 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/15/1968, *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*, PTTVNCH 29916).

<sup>90</sup> “Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước phiên họp khoáng đại lưỡng viện Quốc Hội ngày 10/4/1968” in CV 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/11/1968, PTTĐIIICH 7752, *tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của bộ Thông tin năm 1971*.

<sup>91</sup> Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước phiên họp khoáng địa Lưỡng Viện ngày 2.11.1968,” attached to CV 217-TT/P.Th.T/VP dated 11/5/1968, NVKQG 266: *Tài Liệu của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Tổng Bộ Văn Hóa Xã Hộ, Nha Giám Đốc Văn khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia về học tập chính trị năm 1966-1968*

<sup>92</sup> CV 199-CD/VP dated 11/2/1968, PTTĐIIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*; see folder PTTVNCH 29917, *Kiến Nghị của cá tỉnh v/v ủng hộ lập trường của Tổng Thống nhân học tập bức thông điệp ngày 02.11.1968 của Tổng Thống*.

<sup>93</sup> See “Biên bản Phiên họp ủy ban điều hợp tâm lý chiến trung ương ngày 27-2-1969 tại Bộ Thông Tin,” attached to 1490/BTT.UBĐHTLC/TU dated 3/3/1969; CV 868/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/CT dated 3/14/1969 in *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273; CV 1355/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 4/21/1969

Education as well as the Ministry of National Defense and other military- and pacification-based organs.<sup>94</sup>

Reports from these meetings in early 1969 highlighted the importance of political study and its role in “political encouragement” *động viên chính trị*—a measure that conference participants deemed must be elevated to a “national policy” *chính sách quốc gia*. The significance of such an initiative would revolve around two main goals: developing nationalist sentiments and expanding anticommunist sentiments. The central themes of the resolutions developed was creating an information dissemination structure which would seamlessly conjoin political activities of civil societal groups and that of the Republican state. This new structure was meant to resolve the “divided...organizationally loose, sporadic, and weakly active” characteristics of civil societal groupings and the inability of the state to effectively “lead” Republican political groupings. Political study and the development of new study materials was emphasized, including a proposed pocket-sized popular journal which would include “study materials, section to respond to questions and inquiries, news and letters, etc.” Core responsibilities in such a project will include not only the Information Ministry, but also the Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Education and Youth—each with their own targeted population designated to be incorporated in the project. Envisioned in the reports was a regular, nationwide political study effort in which all participants would learn and engage with the ideological materials and messages of the Republican state, and, in doing so, develop proper the ideological “standpoint” necessary to combat the growing threat posed by Vietnamese communism.

These meetings initiated a period of restructuring, during which political study underwent three iterations: 1) The Campaign for Nationwide Political Study *Phong Trào Học Tập Toàn Quốc*,<sup>95</sup> 2) The Political Encouragement Program *Chương Trình Động Viên Chính Trị*,<sup>96</sup> and 3) The General Information Program *Chương Trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng*.<sup>97</sup> Although under different nomenclatures, the emphasized content of political study remained that of the regime’s position at the Paris conferences and the matter of peace. Each iteration is best understood as a step in a process that increasingly standardized study materials and sessions, centralized control over the political activities of individual administrative organs and sought to move the ideological contents from within the state to the broader population.<sup>98</sup> Apart from the Campaign

<sup>94</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ v/v tổ chức ‘phong trào học tập toàn quốc’” attached to CV 1679/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 5/16/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273.

<sup>95</sup> Full organizational outline: 345/PThT/STTL dated 4/30/1969, PTTVNCH 30273; *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*; Formal Directive to establish Nationwide Political Study Campaign: CV 586-NĐ/P.Th.T/VP dated 5/22/1969, PTTVNCH 30270; *Tài liệu của PThT, Bộ Quốc Phòng v/v thành lập Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Hướng Dẫn học tập tại Trung Ương và các Tỉnh năm 1969*.

<sup>96</sup> Premiership of Trần Thiện Khiêm; formal directive establishing Political Mobilization Program: CV 1147-a/NĐ/ThT dated 10/28/1969, PTTVNCH 30445; *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

<sup>97</sup> Directive replacing Political Mobilization committee with TTĐC: CV 367/NĐ/ThT/BDPT dated 4/6/1970, PTTVNCH 30445; *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

<sup>98</sup> See “Biên bản Phiên họp ủy ban điều hợp tâm lý chiến trung ương ngày 27-2-1969 tại Bộ Thông Tin,” attached to 1490/BTT.UBĐHTLC/TƯ dated 3/3/1969; CV 868/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/CT dated 3/14/1969 in *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273; CV 1355/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 4/21/1969.



for Nationwide Political Study, the central directive body was chaired by the Premier. The Ministry of Information, however, played a central role throughout all three iterations; first, serving as chair of the central directive body under the Campaign for Nationwide Political Study, and then as general secretary for the two subsequent formats. Familiar participants such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education as well as the Ministry of National Defense and other military- and pacification-based organs continue to serve as committee members on the central directive body.<sup>99</sup>

Despite the administrative shifts in the position of chairmanship over the central directive body, all three iterations were organizationally identical. Reflecting the desire for tighter control over ideological work, the new model introduced multiple mechanisms which directly connected the central directive body with lower level entities. Like previous formats, each organ would establish a local directive body headed by the respective director or minister of the administrative body and would be responsible for general oversight of study organization and activities. A two-tiered system was reimplemented for participants with rank 1 cadres to serve as presenters for rank 2 sessions. The former would be comprised of administrative heads and selected personnel, while the latter would be for lower-level workers.<sup>100</sup> To ensure simultaneity in political study activities between different localities, a regular office in contact with the central directing body was established at each individual organ study materials and the central directive body regularly distributed standardized schedules detailing mandatory study topics.<sup>101</sup>

More closely reflecting the ideals of the PSP of the First Republic than the “Discussion Movement,” the new format emphasized political study as a “regular, obvious, and necessary activity in order to elevate work and spirit in service of the people.” Indeed, political study was “among the various responsibilities of cadres, civil servants and soldiers towards their organ or unit—it cannot be something taken as arbitrary or disinterested.”<sup>102</sup> In its final form, the General Information Program emphasized “distributing important news and events on a weekly basis [within the administration and civil societal groups]...to help these entities understand the [contemporary] situation correctly and nurture faith in the victory of our national just cause in the face of the communist’s destructive war of infiltration.” Political study became a component that would ensure that agents of the state not only be ideologically trained to “correctly” interpret unfolding events, but that these agents would be able transfer their ideological knowledge to the broader masses. In concurrence with the vision laid out by Thiệu in April of 1968, the program sought to ensure that “every civil servant, military personnel and cadre be an Information cadre and be trained in the policies and thought of nationalist anticommunism.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> 586/NĐ/PThT/VP dated 5/22/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273

<sup>100</sup> 345/PThT/STTL dated 4/30/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273.

<sup>101</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ v/v tổ chức ‘phong trào học tập toàn quốc’” attached to CV 1679/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 5/16/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273.

<sup>102</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ v/v tổ chức ‘phong trào học tập toàn quốc’” attached to CV 1679/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 5/16/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273.

<sup>103</sup> CV 110/BTT/CTTL/VP dated 9/4/1970, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*, PTTVNCH 30445.

Several initiatives point to increased governmental resources and commitment under the new program. First, the new PSP model placed emphasis on the selection and training of session presenters and presidors. For one, the model revived the “presentation troupe” *thuyết trình đoàn* which had ceased to exist since 1960.<sup>104</sup> The “troupe” would be composed of selected personnel who would not only aid in organizing study for rank 1 cadres, but were required to attend regular conferences held at the central level, be readily available to present at specialized study sessions and training modules, and collaborate to craft study materials by “researching, summarization, and resolving outstanding questions.” In 1970, under the General Information Program, an extensive training program was implemented for the presenters and presidors of study sessions. From mid-July until the end of October 1970, 16 cohorts entailing more than 1,000 governmental personnel underwent intensive training sessions which dove not simply into ideological materials, but also the history of political study practices,<sup>105</sup> informational technology,<sup>106</sup> methods of public speaking,<sup>107</sup> rumor spreading,<sup>108</sup> and even how to draft a news report.<sup>109</sup>

As political study underwent reconfiguration and the General Information Program prepared for nationwide expansion, these skills were deemed necessary for the administrative men and women who would all be transformed into “information cadres” of the state.<sup>110</sup> These individuals were selected from the 21 primary ministerial organs at the governmental center and were designated to take the knowledge acquired to restructure and properly implement political study in their respective organs. For the duration of the General Information Program, rank 1 cadres attended regular conferences prior to the mass distribution of political study materials to review learned topics as well as how to properly incorporate the new study materials into organ-specific study sessions. As rank 1 cadres were designated presenters for rank 2 sessions, these individuals trained for public speaking, studied precise talking-points in defense of the regime, and usage and utility of information technology.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>104</sup> The idea of a “presenter troupe” originated under the tenure of Trần Chánh Thành. Drawing from a cohort of CDTC cadres, those who demonstrated capabilities in matters of public speaking and political presentation came to be members of a mobile team of presenters that Trần Chánh Thành formed in mid-1956. These individuals were expected to research and develop their own materials for dissemination when they are called upon to present at sessions. These presenters could be switched and called upon by different administrative organs to conduct presentations on their area of expertise. Trần Chánh Thành called this group “Thuyết Trình Đoàn” (CV số 2232-HĐTC/TT dated 8.6.1956 and CV số 2299-HĐTC/TT/Tr dated 8.24.1956 in PTTĐỊCH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v tổ chức học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*).

<sup>105</sup> “Bài thuyết trình về công tác hội thảo cơ quan trong lãnh vực thông tin đại chúng” to 2914/BTT/TTĐC/V dated 7/30/1970 and “tổ chức và hướng dẫn các buổi học tập, hội thảo,” PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>106</sup> “Kỹ thuật thông tin tuyên truyền,” and “Đề Tài: Tổ chức meeting biểu tình và chống biểu tình,” PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>107</sup> “nghệ thuật nói trước quần chúng” PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>108</sup> “Công tác mạn đàm rỉ tai,” PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>109</sup> “cách làm và phổ biến tuyên truyền phẩm” and “Thực hiện một bản tin” PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>110</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v thực thi chương trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng,” circa Sep 1970, CV 1499/CTTL/KH/BD/CT dated 9/5/1970 and CV 110/BTT/CTTL/VP dated 9/4/1970, PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>111</sup> Presenter troupe: 1 elected by each organ within the ministry to represent and “có khả năng sung vào thuyết trình đoàn và thông báo cho Ban Tham Muu Thông Tin Đại Chúng. Từng kỳ hoặc từng tháng, Ban này sẽ triệu tập Thuyết trình đoàn để chọn tài liệu và phân công.” (CV 167/ĐV/PThT/BC dated 10/2/1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*). Long term goal of the General Information Program includes forming of professional presenter troupe with capabilities, “chuyên viên hóa thuyết trình viên,” alongside establishing mobile information cadres “phái đoàn lưu động tới các Phủ Bộ tham dự sinh hoạt”; a clear schedule for studies; system of rewards, encouragement, “cleanse thoughts” gột rửa tư tưởng; regularized activities;

Second, the Ministry of Information began publishing handheld booklets that simplified study materials for popular consumption—a desired initiative that was first articulated during the program’s preparatory phase in February of 1969. With the financial support of JUSPAO, thousands of these booklets were distributed each month under the General Information Program with directives encouraging administrative personnel to utilize these booklets to propagate to their families and neighbors. The booklets took on a question and answer format and administrative personnel were ordered to always have these booklets on hand to properly defend and explain the policies of the regime in all social and formal contexts. Moreover, study materials would be “double-sided” *hai chiều* in the form of these questions and answers. Questions would often take on an oppositional perspective so that answers could rhetorically combat potential misgivings in defense of the state’s policies.<sup>112</sup>

Last, the new program implemented formal mechanisms for increased scrutiny by the center over local organs. For one, all propaganda utilized during the General Information must first be sent to the central directing body prior their enactment and distribution. This was particularly the case for General Information offices outside in peripheral provinces. All materials crafted by local offices were directed to be submitted to the Ministry of Information and archived along with a report on quantity and indicate that permission for distribution of materials was granted.<sup>113</sup> For another, direct responsibility for proper and regular political study was placed on administrative heads. This meant that, in the provinces, the military officers who headed each province were required to not only submit monthly reports on study activities, these men were held accountable for organizing study sessions, scheduling topics of study, and ensuring that study sessions were regular and attended.<sup>114</sup> These burdens placed on provincial chiefs were eventually relaxed in 1971 allowing administrative heads to delegate responsibilities to their immediate subordinates.<sup>115</sup>

Within the military, since 1968, political study ran on a different schedule and was placed under the purview of the Department of Political Warfare *Tổng Cục Chiến Tranh Chính Trị*. After the reconfiguration, the General Directorate of Political Warfare retained its oversight of

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local participation in crafting of study materials (contest and rewards for drafting materials); study conferences, and inspectorate ("Bài thuyết trình về công tác hội thảo cơ quan trong lãnh vực thông tin đại chúng" attached to 2914/BTT/TTĐC/V dated 7/30/1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*)

<sup>112</sup> CV 111/BTT/CTTL/VP dated 9/4/1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*; "Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v thực thi chương trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng" circa Sept. 1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*; examples: "làm thế nào để xây dựng một hậu phương bền vững," at. To 361/PThT/BC2 dated 7/3/1971 (booklet number 9), "chính sách và chương trình nông nghiệp," at. To 361/PThT/BC2 dated 7/3/1971 (booklet number 10), "TAI SAO TA PHẢI TỰ CHẾ VÀ LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ TỰ CHẾ" at. To 361/PThT/BC2 dated 7/3/1971 (booklet number 11).

<sup>113</sup> CV 111/BTT/CTTL/VP dated 9/4/1970, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*, PTTVNCH 30445; CV 2574/PThT/BĐPT/CT dated 8/15/1970, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*, PTTVNCH 30445.

<sup>114</sup> CV 2574/PThT/BĐPT/CT dated 8/15/1970, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*, PTTVNCH 30445; 42/UBTTĐC/T dated 8/31/1970, *Tổ chức các buổi học tập thông tin đại chúng tại Phủ Thủ Tướng năm 1970-1971*, PTTVNCH 30670.

<sup>115</sup> 2921/BTT/CTTL/CT/TT dated 9/14/1971, *Tài Liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin hướng dẫn học tập về kế hoạch cộng đồng tự vệ và cộng đồng phát triển địa phương năm 1971-1972*, PTTVNCH 30921

political study in the military.<sup>116</sup> While the organ was free to utilize any study material it deemed appropriate for its soldiers—such as the utilization of weaponry, forbiddance of political activity within the military, and new communist tactics to be wary of—study sessions within the military continued to be aligned with what was studied in civil organs, particularly Presidential speeches, new pacification efforts and matters relating to the Paris conference and peace.<sup>117</sup> Political study in military units was to be regular, though should be “flexible...[and] not interfere with their security activities.”<sup>118</sup> The General Directorate of Political Study and the Ministry of Information would exchange materials to ensure compatibility of study topics for military personnel.<sup>119</sup>

By the time the General Information Program ended in December of 1972, the informational reach of the Thiệu administration was extensive. For more than 2 years, there was no substantial shake-up in the political study effort. Moreover, the General Information Program had expanded beyond the administrative center and had penetrated the regular activities of militia, irregular and regional forces.<sup>120</sup> Evidence points to successes in civil societal organizations as well. Teams of mobile information cadres were sent to rural hamlets, schools, and at social gatherings to propagate for the regime and organize collective study sessions. These efforts paralleled measures to utilize television presence, cultural production, and other media activities to broadcast the ideological position of the regime. Notably, these efforts laid the foundation for broad propagandistic activities, particularly following the Easter Offensive in 1972 in which the regime mobilized for the “Campaign by the Rear to Support the Front” *Chiến Dịch Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến*. Study sessions focused on the difference between the Tết Offensive in 1968 and the recent communist offensive. Cast as a glorious success for the South Vietnamese military and the national program of self-reliance, the regime amped its anticommunist rhetoric and pushed for continued mobilization rather than suing for peace. Information cadres proselytized a similar message outside of the state and drew on the support of a number of political parties and religious groups alike. Most importantly, the movement

<sup>116</sup> “Trong quân đội, Tổng Cục Chiến Tranh Chính Trị sẽ nghiên cứu hình thức tổ chức thích hợp miễn làm sao đạt được các mục tiêu và nguyên tắc đã đề ra trong kế hoạch,” CV 868/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/CT dated 3/14/1969 in *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273.

<sup>117</sup> *Báo cáo tổ chức và sinh hoạt tập thể của các phòng, sở thuộc võ phòng phủ thủ tướng năm 1968-1969*, PTTVNCH 30272.

<sup>118</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v tổ chức ‘phong trào học tập toàn quốc’” attached to CV 1679/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 5/16/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273.

<sup>119</sup> 28/T.AX/QĐ dated 7/2/1969.

<sup>120</sup> PTTVNCH 30272: *Báo cáo tổ chức và sinh hoạt tập thể của các phòng, sở thuộc võ phòng phủ thủ tướng năm 1968-1969*; “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v tổ chức ‘phong trào học tập toàn quốc’” attached to CV 1679/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 5/16/1969, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*, PTTVNCH 30273; CTCT material for military: “Bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống VNCH tại trường Cao Đẳng Quốc Phòng ngày 1-8-72,” attached to 2767/TCCTCT/CCH/GDCT dated 8/28/1972, PTTVNCH 30917: *Tài liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về thông điệp và các bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống năm 1972*; CV 6563/PKĐT/KCTCT dated 10/31/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*; study session in Civil Defense units on “Nhiệm vụ và công tác của Cán Bộ Phát Triển Nông Thôn khi có ngừng bắn,” 029/PTNT/5/SVVT/M dated 11/04/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

targeted Civil Defense units and new military recruits seeking to ensure its lower-level personnel of ultimate success in the anticommunist war.<sup>121</sup>

The last phase of the PSP paralleled efforts by the Thiệu administration to establish the official narrative on the significance of the Paris Accords and was largely an extension of the General Information Program. The PSP, nevertheless, did undergo a substantial structural change. In early January 1973, Thiệu disbanded the Ministry of Information and established instead a new “General Directorate of Civic Mobilization” *Phủ Tổng Ủy Dân Vận*. Interpreted as a move to shore up support for Thiệu in a potential contest for power following the Accords, the new office was subsumed under the Office of the Presidency and headed by Hoàng Đức Nhã—Thiệu’s 30-year old cousin. The new position consolidated key informational duties into a single office. Indeed, as Director of Civic Mobilization, Nhã assumed the responsibilities of not only the Ministry of Information, but also that of press secretary for the President and several duties once relegated to the Department of Political Warfare.<sup>122</sup>

Structural changes did little to alter the actual operations of political study. While General Information booklets were no longer published and distributed, regular study materials continued to be sent out every month and cadre training conferences continued to be held. The ideological contents of the period largely reflected substance laid out in an ideological campaign by the Directorate of Civic Mobilization in February of 1973. This “Week to Study the Paris Accords” sought to educate the populace on the provisions of the Accords, frame the Paris Accords as a political victory for the Republic, condemn communist violation of the ceasefire, and justify the administration’s decision to sign the agreement.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, political study for the remainder of 1973 reinforced the idea of the Paris Accords as a political success for the Republic and for peace in Vietnam. Study materials continued anticommunist themes, emphasizing that communist violation of the Accords had placed peace in jeopardy and the Republic must remain alert and mobilized to guard against another communist general offensive. Sessions criticized the

<sup>121</sup> "Kế hoạch tổ chức các buổi nói chuyện của các đảng phái chính trị và tôn giáo với đoàn ngũ NDTV trên toàn quốc" circa May 1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*; "Chiến dịch hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến" dated 5/5/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*; 3704/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 12/14/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*

<sup>122</sup> "Thieu Picks cousin for key position," Los Angeles Times, Jan 11, 1973; "Saigon's New Chief Spokesman," New York Times, Jan 11, 1973

<sup>123</sup> Purpose: "tuần lễ học tập hiệp định Ba Lê 21-1-1973 để chuẩn bị đấu tranh chính trị vận động quần chúng chống Cộng Sản" and "nhằm mục đích giải thích cặn kẽ cho cán bộ các ngành, đại diện các đoàn thể chính trị, tôn giáo các hiệp đoàn, hội đoàn v.v... về Hiệp Định Ba Lê ngày 27-1-73 chấm dứt chiến tranh và tái lập hòa bình tại Việt Nam, Phủ Tổng Ủy Dân Vận quyết định động viên toàn bộ cán bộ các cấp thuộc Phủ Tổng Ủy Dân Vận, từ Trung Ương đến địa phương tham gia tuần lễ học tập hiệp định" (CV 87/PTUDV/VP dated 2/8/1973, PTTVNCH 18110: *Tập tài liệu của PThT, các Bộ, tỉnh v/v học tập Hiệp Định ngừng bắn năm 1972-1973*); CV 65/NA/CT/TTKT dated 2/12/1973, PTTVNCH 18110: *Tập tài liệu của PThT, các Bộ, tỉnh v/v học tập Hiệp Định ngừng bắn năm 1972-1973*; CV 78/NA/CT dated 2/19/1973 PTTVNCH 18110: *Tập tài liệu của PThT, các Bộ, tỉnh v/v học tập Hiệp Định ngừng bắn năm 1972-1973*; "Kế hoạch chống thoát ly theo Cộng Sản," 31/PTUDV/KHCT/KH/M dated 3/9/1973, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*.

communist position on the Accords,<sup>124</sup> addressed the matter of prisoner exchange established under the Accords<sup>125</sup> and explain the failures of the La Celle Saint Cloud Conference between South Vietnam and the National Liberation Front.<sup>126</sup>

However, as South Vietnam entered 1974, the administration became quickly embroiled in scandals and controversy. The last year of the Republic was marked by civil societal upsurge and regular protests against the Thiệu administration. For one, Thiệu faced backlash for pushing through an amendment which allowed him to run for a third term.<sup>127</sup> For another, Thiệu and his administration were alleged of corruption and siphoning public funds.<sup>128</sup> In September and October, a slew of military men, provincial heads, and officials were ousted from the administration.<sup>129</sup> By November of 1974, even Hoàng Đức Nhã resigned from his position alongside a number of other cabinet ministers.<sup>130</sup> In those final months, the Thiệu administration faced widespread opposition from Catholic and Buddhist groups alike, with veterans, union leaders, students, reporters, politicians, and congressmen joining multifaceted protests against the regime. Coupled onto this unrest was the depletion of American economic and military aid, the oil embargo of 1973, low-troop morale, and the resumption of fighting between government and communist forces in central Vietnam. The political and economic turmoil introduced a new wave of governmental repression as newspapers were shutdown, publishers arrested, and demonstrations squashed with police violence.<sup>131</sup> Just two weeks before North Vietnamese tanks

<sup>124</sup> "Những bài học hòa đàm với Cộng Sản" Att. To 4627/PThT/STTL dated 10/22/1973, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*; "NHỮNG NỖ LỰC VÔ VỌNG TRÊN MẶT TRẬN NGOẠI GIAO CỦA CSBV TRONG THÁNG 11.1973" attached to CV 6920/PTUDV/KHCT/NC dated 12/4/1973, PTTĐIICH 7757: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của bộ thông tin năm 1972-1973*;

<sup>125</sup> "vấn đề trao trả nhân viên dân sự theo hiệp định Ba Lê 27-01-1973," attached to 31/PTUDV/KHCT/KH/M dated 3/9/1973, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*; "VẤN ĐỀ TRAO TRẢ NHÂN VIÊN DÂN SỰ," attached to 2345/PTUDV/KHCT/NC dated 4/24/1973, PTTĐIICH 7757: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của bộ thông tin năm 1972-1973*.

<sup>126</sup> "BÀI ĐỌC CỦA ÔNG TRƯỞNG PHÁI ĐOÀN VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA TẠI HỘI NGHỊ CẤP CAO LA CELLE SAINT CLOUD NGÀY 25-4-1973" circa May 1973, PTTĐIICH 7757: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của bộ thông tin năm 1972-1973*; "nhận định của phái đoàn VNCH tham dự hội nghị La Celle Saint Cloud về đề nghị 6 điểm ngày 22.03.74 của phía cộng sản," received in CV 1477 dated 3/28/1974 by PTT, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*;

<sup>127</sup> "Backers Ram Through Amendment: Thieu made eligible to run for Third Term," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 20, 1974; "Thieu wins authority to run for third term," *The Washington Post*, Jan 20, 1974;

<sup>128</sup> "Thieu accused of corruption," *The Irish Times*, Sep 11, 1974; "Most of cabinet in Saigon resigns," *New York Times*, Feb. 17, 1974

<sup>129</sup> "2 Viet Generals Reported Fired for Corruption," *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 11, 1974; "Thieu ousts chiefs of 6 provinces," *The Washington Post*, Sep 18, 1974; "377 Officers face purge in Vietnam," *The Sun*, Oct 26, 1974; "Thieu Fires 3 Top Generals, Curbs Protest," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 31, 1974;

<sup>130</sup> "Saigon Press Chief Assailed," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 24, 1974; "4 Leave Cabinet in South Vietnam," *New York Times*, Oct 25, 1974; "4 resign from South Viet Cabinet, including Nha, once key Thieu aide," *The Sun*, Oct 25, 1974.

<sup>131</sup> "All guns, no butter make Saigon desperate town," *The Sun*, May 8, 1974; "Aid Campaign reveals Saigon's Weakness," *The Sun*, May 6, 1974; "Thieu claims US renegeing on aid pledge," *Boston Globe*, Jun 7, 1974; "Vietnam fighting threatens Accord," *The Irish Times*, Aug. 3, 1974; "To Saigon, All Dissenters Are Foes, All Foe are Reds," *New York Times*, Aug. 20, 1974; "A Large Protest Erupts in Saigon," *New York Times*, Sep 21, 1974; "Catholics Join Buddhists: Thieu's Opponent Protest in Saigon," *The Washington Post*, Sep 21, 1974; "Saigon

rumbled through Phước Bình Province, protests erupted against the trial of publishers seized in recent arrests.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, by the time North Vietnam launched its final offensive in January of 1975, Saigon was on the verge of internal collapse. As cities in the Central Region began falling to the North Vietnamese army, Thiệu's political opposition began a hunger strike, the National Assembly burned photographs of the president, Buddhist nuns clashed with the police, and the Thiệu regime expanded its crackdown on the press.<sup>133</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, Thiệu stepped down from the Presidency blaming national woes on the insufficiency of American support and betrayal of commitments.<sup>134</sup> Trần Văn Hương took over the presidency for 5 days before Dương Văn Minh was sworn into office on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. Two days later, South Vietnam surrenders unconditionally to communist forces, ending the 20-year era of the Vietnamese Republic.<sup>135</sup>

The gradual collapse of the Republican State, strangely, registered very loosely with the PSP. Indeed, while the regime faced continuous protests in its final year, study sessions continued to primarily emphasize the communist violations of the Paris Accords rather than engage in direct defense of the regime. The sole exception was an attempt by the Directorate of Civic Mobilization to initiate a study campaign in September of 1974 meant to reinforce the legitimacy of the regime, address the issue of corruption, and proselytize national unity around anticommunism and peace.<sup>136</sup> The campaign paralleled efforts by the Thiệu administration to mollify civil opposition, including promises to rectify widespread corruption and revise a number of laws.<sup>137</sup> The effort, however, was far from successful. Indeed, criticisms of the regime

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Police, Foes of Regime Clash on Newspaper Seizures," *The Washington Post*, Sep 22, 1974; "S. Viet Groups Hit Thieu Regime," *The Atlanta Constitution*, Sep 23, 1974; "Saigon Counters New Opposition," *New York Times*, Sep 25, 1974; "Thousands Turn Out, for Anti-Thieu Rallies," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 7, 1974; "Saigon Police Attack During a Censorship Protest," *New York Times*, Oct 11, 1974; "Saigon Veterans Aid Anti-Thieu Forces," *The Washington Post*, Oct 13, 1974; "Thieu's Power Periled by Low Army Morale," *The Washington Post*, Oct 13, 1974; "Buddhists Pressuring Thieu to end war or Quit," *Boston Globe*, Oct 17, 1974; "Anti-Thieu demonstration erupts into Saigon melee," *Boston Globe*, Oct 21, 1974; "Opposition Press in Saigon to Boycott Government News," *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 21, 1974; "Saigon Assembly Stoned as Youths bid Thieu resign," *New York Times*, Oct. 21, 1974; "Thieu criticized by Labor Leader," *New York Times*, Oct 30, 1974; "Scores injured in anti-Thieu protest," *Boston Globe*, Nov 1, 1974; "Vietnam Catholics want Thieu out," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov 1, 1974; "Priest says Foes of Thieu Plan a Week of Protests," *New York Times*, Nov 3, 1974; "Church protest group bids Thieu quit," *The Sun*, Nov 3, 1974; "Mood in Saigon is that 'with Thieu there is no hope,'" *The Sun*, Nov 3, 1974; "Vietnamese Legislators Ask Thieu's Resignation," *The Washington Post*, Nov 3, 1974; "Saigon restricts Distribution of Printed Material," *New York Times*, Nov 7, 1974; "Thieu censorship backed in a test," *New York Times*, Nov 15, 1974; "Saigon Blocks Catholic March; Protesters Fight with Police," *New York Times*, Nov 28, 1974; "60 hurt in Viet Catholic protest, Thieu makes 6 changes in cabinet," *Boston Globe*, Nov 29, 1974;

<sup>132</sup> Protesters Hit Saigon Publishers' Trial," *The Washington Post*, Dec 27, 1974.

<sup>133</sup> "Buddhists Protest against Thieu," *The Sun*, Jan 27, 1975; "Saigon police continue arrests of journalists," *Boston Globe*, Feb 5, 1975; "Closedown of Saigon Newspapers," *The Irish Times*, Feb 5, 1975; "Saigon Arrests put at 17 in a crackdown on press," *New York Times*, Feb 5, 1975; "49 Politicians Sign in Blood to Protest Thieu," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 9, 1975; "Political Foes Bid Thieu Step Down," *New York Times*, Feb 11, 1975; "Saigon police scuffles with Buddhist nuns," *The Times of India*, Feb 11, 1975; "Protest by Senators, Monks," *The Washington Post*, Apr 1, 1975.

<sup>134</sup> "The Americans Promised Us," *The Washington Post*, Apr 22, 1975.

<sup>135</sup> "Chronology of Vietnam War," *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 30, 1975.

<sup>136</sup> "kế hoạch học tập về vấn đề bài trừ tham nhũng" dated 9/25/1974, PTTVNCH 31331: *Tài liệu học tập v/v thực thi chính sách tiết kiệm, đẩy mạnh sản xuất, tận diệt tham nhũng, củng cố chế độ năm 1971-1974*; summary of study material, see "Tóm lược tài liệu của Phủ Tổng Ủy Công Vụ về vấn đề tham nhũng trong cơ quan chánh quyền và phương thức bài trừ," circa Sept 1974.

<sup>137</sup> "Thieu Vows to alter 2 laws," *The Sun*, Nov. 1, 1974.

and its policies emerged during the very study sessions meant to reinforce the regime legitimacy.<sup>138</sup> Moreover, the initiative lasted less than 2 months before Nhã was ousted from power and no evidence suggests any subsequent efforts. Indeed, beyond this final campaign, there was little indication that the PSP was extensively utilized to defend the administration or demonize the social upsurge in the way that had been done prior to the collapse of the First Republic in 1963 or during the “Struggle Movement” in 1966. As communist forces took Phước Long Province in January of 1975, political study proceeded as usual reviewing 2 years under the Paris Accords. Like the study materials that came before it, this final document emphasized the various communist violations of the Accords, argued that the Republic had demonstrated “goodwill” in enacting the Accord’s provisions, demanded “sacrifice and endurance” within the context of economic deterioration, and called for belief in the ultimate victory of the Republic and its ideals.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Study session reports from Veterans Ministry (Bộ Cựu Chiến Binh) (23548/CCB/NCCT.2 dated 9/17/1974, PTTVNCH 31568: Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975) and from Ministry of Justice (Bộ Tư Pháp) (7056/BTP/VP dated 9/18/1974, PTTVNCH 31568: Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975) both entailed criticism of administration’s handling of allegations of corruption during discussions.

<sup>139</sup> “Tổng Kết Hai Năm Ký Kết Hiệp Định Ba Lê (27.1.1973-27.1.1975),” 20/DVCH/VP/M dated 1/22/1975, PTTVNCH 31568: Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975



## CHAPTER 2: POLITICAL STUDY AS PEDOGAGY AND STATECRAFT

“Nung nấu tư tưởng ngoại nhập thành tư tưởng tự xuất, khác quan thành chủ quan, của Chính quyền thành của nhân dân/*To transform ideas that have penetrated externally into thoughts that are personally derived, from the objective to the subjective, of the government into that of the people*”—Political study planning material, 1956.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 Của Giai Đoạn 1 Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc.” Folder No. 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

In late August 1970, a presentation was delivered at a two-day special conference hosted by the newly formed “General Information Program” *Chương Trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng*. The presentation historicized the practice of political study, situating “the work of study and discussion” *công tác học tập, hội thảo* within the context of recent Vietnamese history. As argued in the presentation, political study activities “in reality, is not new formality. Rather, it had manifested since the days of the French.” As argued, the practice had been widely utilized and similarly appeared in the form of political conventions, mass assemblies, and congregations during which various anticolonial movements, including that of communist organizations, had articulated their political position and revolutionary programs. Contrasting political study during the Second Republic with previous utilization, however, the presentation argued that political study under the Republic has largely shed the “dogmatic” *độc đoán* character of earlier eras and differed substantially from communist applications, which took on elements of “brainwashing” *nhồi sọ* and emphasized class resentment. Indeed, it was under the First Republican Communist Denunciation Campaign that the clearest form of the practice emerged. And although criticized by the presenter as too focused on “retaliation” against communists and unattentive to the “development and reform of the Nation,” this earlier practice was the foundation upon which various psychological warfare initiatives of the Second Republic were based. As argued, whether under a communist manifestation or a Republican one, the purpose of political study was to “promulgate the ideals and directions of an objective to ensure that objective will achieve results.”<sup>2</sup>

The 1970 example above is illustrative of the perceived importance of political study in Republican statecraft and the assumed embeddedness of the practice in Vietnamese political history. On the one hand, the presentation highlights how political study was understood as not merely an abstract concept, but rather a historically derived practice. Moreover, that practice served the crucial role of “promulgation,” seeking to “ensure” political and ideological objectives are achieved. On the other hand, the presenter acknowledges the comparability of political study under the Republic with practices of “brainwashing” deployed by the Vietnamese communists. Within a context of ongoing war against the communist enemy, it is surprising to find such explicit acknowledgement, though an acknowledgement that views favorably the Republican usage for “development and reform of the Nation.” The defense of political study despite its connections to the practices of the communist enemy highlights the perceived embeddedness and indispensability of political study in Republican statecraft.

However, far from a simply a generalized practice that could be found across Vietnamese modern history, state-directed “promulgation” of ideals entailing routinized schedules, standardized study materials, and confined within a didactic structure was, in large part, a form that did not exist during colonial Vietnam. The centralized, systematic, and pedagogical nature of Republican political study differentiates the practice of party-building and mobilization activities of anticolonial movements. Of particular importance is the compulsory weight when it is the Republican government rather than underground revolutionary parties that directed the practice. Under the Republic, political study was a mandated activity by the state—the choice to study was not freely given and penalties were enacted for dissent. A civil servant may find herself

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<sup>2</sup> “Bài Thuyết Trình Về Công Tác Hội Thảo Học Tập Cơ Quan Trong Lãnh Vực Thông Tin Đại Chúng,” attached to CV 2914/BTT/TTĐC/VP dated 7/30/1970, PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

sanctioned or ostracized for lack of participation or ideologically incorrect statements, jeopardizing career promotion and ascension of governmental ranks.

Indeed, the disciplinary technologies which were parcel to the practice of political study were very much “modern.” Within the PSP, what was discussed and how things are discussed was very much managed, dictated by modern and formal curricula, schedules, and procedures. Participants were required to show up on time at a predesignated location, fully attend each session, know when to speak up, engage within their prescribed roles, are tested for memory and knowledge of past lessons or readings, and participate in mandatory rituals (such as singing the national anthem or flag salute). Such activities reflect Foucault’s discussion of military regiments, the factory, and the prison within which “cellular” techniques of power were implemented to create “docile bodies.” Through the regulations of “time, space, movement,” an anticommunist subject was conjured into being, both as governable and imbued with an actionable subjectivity.<sup>3</sup> Regulation and standardization of discussion, space, and time were, indeed, key concerns for orchestrators of the Program. The work of political study had to take priority within administrative functions and, in their view, without such systematization, the aims of the Republic could not be accomplished and the “anticommunist spirit” would be un nourished and not sustained. Moreover, political study was located within a broader institutionalized effort of ideological work—an effort that blended regular state messaging with forms of social control in the attempt to create and sustain a nationwide, anticommunist political culture. Indeed, political study was a tool for the exercise of power for the modernizing Republican state.

One can, however, concur with the presenter that that Republican political study was not a novel phenomenon. The comparable linkage between the ideological work of the Republic and that of their enemy above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel stands upon quite historical reason. For one, the structural organization of the Cần Lao Party, after all, was modeled on the Vietnamese communist party. CLP practices of cell-based organization, surveillance, regular reporting, self-criticism, and democratic centralization find resonance with the operations of their communist enemy. For another, North Vietnam had its own political indoctrination program, publishing its journal *Học Tập* since 1955 as “the organ for the reason and politics of the Party.”<sup>4</sup> This program of “political education” and “reeducation” under Vietnamese communism was modeled on “thought reform” practices of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).<sup>5</sup> Rather than an exclusively

<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (Random House, 1977), 135-194

<sup>4</sup> Bộ Biên Tập Tạp Chí Công Sản, “Chương II: Tạp Chí Học Tập (1955-1976),” *Tạp Chí Công Sản*, Oct. 9, 2015. <<http://www.tapchiconsan.org.vn/web/guest/nhung-chang-duong-phat-trien/-/2018/35140/chuong-ii--tap-chi-hoc-tap-%281955-1976%29.aspx#>>.

<sup>5</sup> Little is actually written on the specificity of “thought reform” under Vietnamese communism, apart from its association with Maoist mobilizing tactics. Indeed, as Xiaobing Li notes, in 1952, Chinese communist advisors aided the launching of the first “Political Education and Thought Reform Movement” in North Vietnam (*The Dragon in the Jungle*, 53). In 1953, practices of “thought reform” and “land reform” of the Chinese Three Anti-Campaign was introduced to the Vietminh. As Morris writes: “The use of thought reform programs, reform through labor, and reeducation camps, emphasizing psychological transformation as well as physical forms of punishment, were also various on the Soviet model that the Vietnamese borrowed from Mao’s China” (Stephen Morris, *Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War* [Stanford University Press, 1999], 127). Compulsory ideological study and forced labor were also implemented as part of the “reeducation” that former South Vietnamese officials and military officers had to endure after 1975 (Ginetta Sagon and Stephen Denney, *Violations of human rights in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, April 30, 1975-April 30, 1983* [Aurora Foundation, 1983]; William J. Duiker, “Ideology and Nation-Building in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam,” *Asian Survey* 17, no.5 [1977], 413-431). What is known about reeducation camps are largely taken from memoirs and oral histories of

communist practice, thought had been “a key component” of Chinese politics since the Republican administration of Sun Yatsen, enforced upon political cadres and “an unruly and generally disinterested public” alike. Similar to its Kuomintang precursor, the Chinese communist state viewed its citizens as moldable and amorphous entities, lacking a “moral compass” but could be “shaped by moral education.”<sup>6</sup> As practiced under Mao, “thought reform” sought to transform enemies of the state (“class enemies,” like the intelligentsia and the liberal bourgeoisie),<sup>7</sup> undesirables,<sup>8</sup> and potentially rebels<sup>9</sup> into ideologically and politically reeducated subjects through “study” and compulsory labor, thus allowing the eventual enlisting of these reformed peoples into construction of communist China.<sup>10</sup> While indoctrination practices under Chinese communism emphasized “labor” and corporal punishment far more than the Vietnamese Republican practice of political study, both shared the goal of rectifying and molding new human subjects through regular and compulsory ideological education.

While Cheek would attribute such a conception to “Confucian” mores embedded in Chinese imperial history,<sup>11</sup> the impetus for ideological, political, and moral reconfiguration of people’s “hearts and minds” is perhaps more accurately located in the experiences of modernist utopian projects that spanned across the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Indeed, as Wang argues, Mao’s concept of the “New Man” was not the “pre-modern” Chinese subject, but rather its “modern other”; living,

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former prisoners: e.g., Hoa Minh Truong, *The Dark Journey: Inside the Reeducation Camps of Viet Cong* (Strategic Book Publishing, 2010); James Freeman, *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese-American Lives* (Stanford University, 1989), 199-287.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Cheek, “Thought Reform” in Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubere (eds.), *Afterlives of Chinese Communism* (Australian National University Press, 2019), 287-292.

<sup>7</sup> Theodore His-en Chen, “The Thought Reform of Intellectuals,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 321 (1959), 82-89; political legacies of intelligentsia category and thought reform: Eddy U, “The making of Chinese Intellectuals: Representations and Organization in the Thought Reform Campaign,” *The China Quarterly* 192 (2007), 971-989.

<sup>8</sup> Thought reform of beggars, prostitutes, and the socially marginalized: Aminda Smith, “The Dilemma of Thought Reform: Beijing Reformatories and the Origins of Reeducation Through Labor, 1949-1957,” *Modern China* 39,2 (2012), 203-234; Aminda Smith, “Thought Reform and the Unreformable: Reeducation Centers and the Rhetoric of Opposition in the Early People’s Republic of China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, 4 (2013), 937-958. Thought reform of mentally ill: Arthur Kleinman and David Mechanic, “Mental Illness and Psychosocial Aspects of Medical Problems in China,” in Arthur Kleinman and Tsung-Yi Lin (eds.), *Normal and Abnormal Behavior in Chinese Culture* (Springer, 1981), 331-356; Sing Lee, “Diagnosis Postponed: Shenjing Shuairuo and the Transformation of Psychiatry in Post-Mao China,” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 23 (1999), 349-380. Equating mental illness with an “ideological problem” during Cultural Revolution: Yan He Qin, “The Necessity of Retaining the Diagnostic Concept of Neurasthenia,” *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 13, 2(1989), 139-145.

<sup>9</sup> Buddhist monks, for example, were forced to undergo compulsory “study” classes following the ascension of the CCP to power (Holmes Welch, “Buddhism under the Communists,” *The China Quarterly* 6[1961], 1-14). Thought reform as an institutionalized corrective practice: Victor Shaw, “Productive Labor and Thought Reform in Chinese Corrections: A Historical and Comparative Analysis,” *The Prison Journal* 78, 2 (1998), 186-211; Bin Liang and Corinice Wilson, “A critical review of past studies on China’s corrections and recidivism,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 50(2008), 245-262.

<sup>10</sup> Endurance of the practice after the Maoist period: Anne-Marie Brady, “Mass Persuasion as a Means of Legitimation and China’s Popular Authoritarianism,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, 3(2009), 434-457; Aminda Smith, “Remoulding minds in postsocialist China: Maoist reeducation and twenty-first-century subjects,” *Postcolonial Studies* 15, 4(2012), 453-466.

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Cheek, “Thought Reform” in Christian Sorace, Ivan Franceschini, and Nicholas Loubere (eds.), *Afterlives of Chinese Communism* (Australian National University Press, 2019), 287, 289.

striving, and sacrificing for the utopian future rather than the restoration of the past.<sup>12</sup> However, less an ambition exclusive to communism or China, it is perhaps more fruitful to follow Lifton and define these projects for revolutionary transformation of “the self” as stemming from the ambitions of states and elites to realize their “quest for absolute or ‘totalistic’ belief systems.”<sup>13</sup> Such quests can generate the “most extreme expressions of totalism, of the self’s immersion in all-or-nothing ideological and behavior patterns”<sup>14</sup> and, once conjoined with modernist idealism and the capacity of the centralized state, can result in radical ethno-nationalist projects like that of the Nazi’s Aryan utopia or the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia.<sup>15</sup> While these are extreme examples of state efforts to craft the loyal and compliant citizen-subject, the deployment of pedagogical techniques to advance modernizing projects can be seen as existing upon a much broader continuum, ranging from civic education under liberal democracies to totalitarian disciplinary institutions like the Soviet Gulag.<sup>16</sup> Rather than a process exclusive to communist or totalitarian states, resonances of this impetus for citizen-forming projects can be found in the cases of Japan,<sup>17</sup> Turkey,<sup>18</sup> Taiwan,<sup>19</sup> England,<sup>20</sup> and South Africa.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Aihe Wang, “From Totalitarian to Utilitarian: The Coupling of Mao’s New Man and the Liberal Old Self,” *Global Society* 53(2016), 188-203.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Lifton, *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism* (University of North Carolina Press, 1989), vii.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Lifton, *The Protean Self: Human Resilience in an Age of Fragmentation* (Basic Books, 1993), 161.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Miller, Benjamin Barber, and Shuvo Bakar, “Indoctrination and coercion in agent motivation: Evidence from Nazi Germany,” *Rationality and Society* 30, 2(2018), 189-219. Lasting effects of Nazi indoctrination methods: Nico Voigtlander and Hans-Joachim Voth, “Nazi Indoctrination and anti-Semitic beliefs in Germany,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in the United States of America* 112,26(2015), 7931-7936; Kosal Path and Angeliki Kanavou, “Converts, not Ideologues? The Khmer Rouge practice of thought reform in Cambodia, 1975-1978,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20,3(2015), 304-332; Karl D. Jackson, “Ideology of Total Revolution” in (ed.) Jackson, *Cambodia, 1975-1978: Rendezvous with Death* (1989), 37-78.

<sup>16</sup> Erik Van Ree, “Problems of Communism: Gulag Authorities and Gulag Victims,” *International Review of Social History* 58, 1(2013), 107-119; more moderate cases of state-directed pedagogy for citizen-formation: S.I. Ploss, “Political Education in the Postwar Komosol,” *The American Slavic and East European Review* 15, no.4, (1956), 489-505; Singapore also had its own program of “political study” for state administrators: Sam Choon-Yin, “Singapore’s Experience in Curbing Corruption and the Growth of the Underground Economy,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 20,1(2005), 39-66. Non-state usage of pedagogical techniques to create compliant subjects can be found in religious cults and fundamentalist movements: James T. Richardson, Mary Harder, and Robert B. Simmonds, “Thought Reform and the Jesus Movement,” *Youth & Society* 4,2(1972), 185-202; Lita Linzer Schwartz and Florence Kaslow, “Religious Cults, the Individual, and the Family,” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 5,2(1979), 15-26.

<sup>17</sup> Brian McVeigh, “Linking State and Self: How the Japanese State Bureaucratizes Subjectivity through Moral Education,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 71,3 (1998), 125-137

<sup>18</sup> Kim Shively, “Taming Islam: Studying Religion in Secular Turkey,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 81, 3[2008], 683-711.

<sup>19</sup> Allen Chun, “De-Societalizing the School: On the hegemonic making of the moral persons (citizenship) and its disciplinary regimes,” *Critique of Anthropology* 33, no.2 (2013), 146-167.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer demonstrates that the English state served as a moral regulator, bringing forth a “cultural revolution” by intruding into the lives of its citizens, imposing ideologies, and instituting conditions for national belonging and political representation, (*The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* [Blackwell, 1985])

<sup>21</sup> The African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party in South Africa, instituted mass mobilizing techniques that emphasize “political education” of its members who “are meant to be active agents of the party and...engaged in sustained year-round political activities.” Coming into power, the ANC utilized military camps to enact political education (Vincent Darracq, “Being a ‘Movement of the People’ and a Governing Party: Study of the African National Congress Mass Character,” *Journal of South African Studies* 34, 2(2008), 429-449.

One must then concur with Kaplan who argues that “today, all countries are pedagogical states, or at least endeavor to be.”<sup>22</sup> Since John Dewey introduced the relationship between education and politics in 1916, the role of the state in cultivating a loyal citizenry had been emphasized in a variety of studies on state-formation. Norbert Elias pointed to the indissoluble link between state-formation and disciplinary education.<sup>23</sup> Wiggins pointed to the importance of civic education in cultivating American nationalism.<sup>24</sup> Gellner underscored education in conjuring and propagating the “high culture” of nationalism which allowed the creation of a nation-state.<sup>25</sup> More recent studies have adopted Foucault and Bourdieu to examine disciplinary efforts of the state at core sites of power. Indicative of this trend, the emerging scholarship targets key sites of state-managed education (i.e., youth mobilization, public schools, migration centers, citizenship education) to demonstrate how the modern state is an essential agent in the political and moral socialization of citizens, highlighting the theoretical capacity of this approach to bridge macro-level processes of state formation and development with micro-level analysis of individual subjectivities and cultural psychology. Through this process, structures and ideas corroborating state-power, economic activities, and ideals of the nation are reproduced and maintained.<sup>26</sup>

Emphasized in the recent scholarship, particularly those who deploy the concept of the “pedagogical state,” is the idea that citizens are not passive “cultural dopes” who are easily manipulated or “brainwashed” by the nation-state. Rather, they are critical and engaged subjects who enter a “contract” with the state and are actors who can negotiate their terms of governance.<sup>27</sup> An appropriation of Foucault’s notion of power, scholars of the pedagogical state view attempts by states to shape behavior, thoughts, and actions do not result in a complete capturing of pedagogized subjects. Rather, students and teachers are “invit[ed]...to self-govern in a manifestly reflexive manner.” The reflexivity afforded in an educational system opens up avenue through which subjects can “articulate and respond” to imposed values and practices and make “direct and explicit intervention in their governability.”<sup>28</sup> While such negotiation is very much conditioned by values, beliefs, and social structures imposed by the state, these scholars highlight the importance of viewing power both as a limiting device and an enabling one. This is

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<sup>22</sup> Sam Kaplan, *The Pedagogical State: Education and the Politics of National Culture in Post-1980 Turkey*, (Stanford University Press, 2006), 227; Ghassan Shabeneh, “Education and Identity: Role of UNRWA’s Education Programmes in the Reconstruction of Palestinian Nationalism,” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 25, No.4 (2012), 491-513; Jessica Pykett, “Citizenship Education and Narratives of Pedagogy,” *Citizenship Studies* 14, no.6, 621-635; Eva Codo, “Regimenting Discourse, controlling bodies: Disinformation, evaluation and moral categorization in a state bureaucratic agency,” *Discourse & Society* 22, No.6 (2011), 723-742; Nir Gazit, “Social Agency, Spatial Practices, Power: The Micro-foundations of Fragmented Sovereignty in the Occupied Territories,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 22, No.1 (2009), 83-103.

<sup>23</sup> Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: the history of manners*, (Blackwell, 1997 [1939])

<sup>24</sup> Gladys Anna Wiggins, *Education and Nationalism: An Historical Interpretation of American Education* (McGraw-Hill Books Company, 1962).

<sup>25</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Blackwell, 1983).

<sup>26</sup> Sayaka Chatani, “Nation-Empire: Rural Youth Mobilization in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea 1895-1945,” diss., (Columbia University, 2014); Allen Chun, “De-Societalizing the School: On the hegemonic making of the moral persons (citizenship) and its disciplinary regimes,” *Critique of Anthropology* 33, no.2 (2013), 146-167;

<sup>27</sup> Zhenzhou Zhao, “Pedagogisation of nation identity through textbook narratives in China: 1902-1948,” *Citizenship Studies* 18, no.1, 99-112,

<sup>28</sup> Jessica Pykett, “Citizenship Education and Narratives of Pedagogy,” *Citizenship Studies* 14, no.6, 621-635.

particularly important for understanding the role of the PSP in the construction of the anticommunist citizen.

The purpose of pedagogy through the Program was not simply to craft governable anticommunist subjects, it was also to conjure into being knowledgeable, critical, and politically active citizens. The making of an anticommunist nation within an environment of war and “underdevelopment” necessitates a citizenry that would “enthusiastically” contribute. To achieve a critical and active citizenry, the PSP served as a technique for imparting necessary knowledge for proper political engagement. Participants are expected to, on the one hand, “absorb” the disseminated knowledge of the state. On the other hand, they are to apply what is learned in their administrative duties as well as to all affairs of their public and private lives. Within the PSP, participants were encouraged to profess the values of anticommunism by linking lessons and readings to their own life experiences, to vocalize their ideas, thoughts, and interpretations during discussions, articulate discontents or suggest revisions to develop a more robust curriculum, and serve as session leaders and presenters. In this sense, participants are encouraged to engage in modes of discursive engagement, creation, and elaboration.

As subjects incorporate and reutilize state-imposed ideas in reflexive, creative (though managed) ways, state-discourse can be perpetuated and maintained. However, in South Vietnam, it was not only the narrative that continued, but also core pedagogical techniques and programs, such as the PSP. As demonstrated at the beginning of this introduction, the practice of political study was perceived in 1970 by the orchestrators of the General Information Program as a practice so embedded that it was not only a key aspect of Republican history, but to modern Vietnamese history as a whole. Such a conception articulates the perceived institutionalization of the practice. Indeed, as noted in the previous chapter, the deployment of the practice to inculcate ideas of anticommunism, modernity, and patriotic fervor amongst civil servants, military personnel, and the broader masses spanned across numerous Republican regimes. As a regular refrain throughout the Republican era, inculcation of beliefs must target the three segments of “Soldiers-Cadres-Administrators” *Quân-Cán-Chính*—the agents who would carry out the directives of the Republican state. Moreover, through the PSP, the Republican state maintains its pedagogical function and the systematization of the practice across Republican history transformed political study into something regularized and perceived as enduringly necessary for the proper functioning of state.

The institutionalization of political study as a tool of state discipline and pedagogy was not automatic. While the philosophical rooting of Personalist Revolution and its totalitarian vision—not particularly unique to the “high modernism” of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—were essential components in explaining the emergence of the PSP, the sustaining of this practice across some 20-odd years requires continuous, regular, and systematic effort for practical and discursive maintenance. Challenges to state ambitions to mold a compliant citizenry must be actively rectified and participants must be persuaded or coerced into participation. From the start, constant issues related to participation and “enthusiasm” would plague the history of the PSP and orchestrators took conscious efforts to attempt to resolve these problems. The PSP, after all, faced a 20-month hiatus after the collapse of the First Republic when it was demonized as authoritarian, and would not have been re-inaugurated without the political will of those who saw value in the practice.

### *Institutionalization*

I borrow from Huntington to define “institutionalization” as the process through which organizations, discourses, and practices “acquire value and stability” overtime.<sup>29</sup> This process of “acquisition” as far from something automatic or natural, but rather institutionalization can be best seen as an ideal pursued by historical agents to maintain and sustain certain social configurations, often with the belief that the persistence of these configurations lends itself to broader ideological or political goals. Adopting this definition of institutionalization, institutions—the necessary product of the institutionalization process—can be conceptualized as socially constructed “accretions of past practices and understandings that set conditions on [subsequent] action.”<sup>30</sup> Because the process of institutionalization often transforms these practice and understandings into “taken-for-granted facts,”<sup>31</sup> institutions persist as a result of repetitive and regulated action and deviation from prescribed norms of action results in punitive sanctions and social costs.<sup>32</sup>

These normative prescriptions are safeguards to sustain the function and goals of the institution, limiting the possible course of actions that actors can take by virtue of the rules and modes of actions established prior. This “path dependent” character of the institution provides a measure of stability that sustain and perpetuate existing patterns of practices and procedures.<sup>33</sup> The fact that institutions require safeguards does not necessarily contradict those of the culturalist persuasion who press the fact that institutionalized practices are “taken-for-granted.” To engage with the world, human beings necessarily must draw upon the existing to reflect meaningfully on their past actions and plan future for future actions. This knowledge is socially shared and are appreciated as “obvious” and necessary components of social life. Existing in the minds of social actors, prescribed modes of actions are activated in specific time and places, and, as such, sanctions exist latently and are activated when rule-breaking occurs.<sup>34</sup>

Although ingrained as a state practice, political study historically faced endemic challenges that threatened the perpetuity of the Program. These challenges resulted from not only the dynamic nature of politics during the Republican era, but also the occasional proclivity for resistance and lack of enthusiasm for the practice amongst participants. In the cases in which the legitimacy of the practice is challenged, state orchestrators purposefully enact forms of sanctions and modifications to sustain mass participation in the Program. In this light, how participants respond to pedagogical techniques had a direct effect upon the procedures implemented and the content taught. Concern towards making sessions “enthusiastic” for participants entailed rectification of the program design and integrating diverse reading materials, pedagogical strategies, and even the scheduling of study sessions. Read through the lens of institutionalization, the embeddedness of the PSP is, firstly, a product of deliberate imposition of

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven, 1968), 12.

<sup>30</sup> Stephen Barley and Pamela Tolbert, “Institutionalization and structuration: Studying the links between action and institutions,” *Organization Studies* 18 (1997), 93-117.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Lawrence, Monika Winn and P. Devereaux Jennings, “The Temporal Dynamics of Institutionalization,” *Academy of Management Review* 26, 624-644.

<sup>33</sup> James Mahoney, “Path Dependence in Historical Sociology,” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000), 507-548.

<sup>34</sup> Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, “Introduction” to Walter Powell and Paul DiMaggio (eds.), *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, (University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1-38; Nelson Phillips, Thomas Lawrence, and Cynthia Hardy, “Discourse and Institutions,” *The Academy of Management Review* 29, No.4 (2004), 635-652; Mustafa Emirbayer and Anne Mische, “What is Agency?” *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no.4 (1998), 962-1023.



the practice as a necessary component of administrative work, and, secondly, consequence of its widespread valuation once this imposition was achieved and, which, when threatened, required deliberate actions by Republican state builders to sustain. In this sense, the embeddedness of the PSP has “self-reinforcing” mechanisms that, nevertheless, must be actively sustained in moments of challenge or crisis.

The fact that the PSP was an institutionalized practice, however, does not mean that practice did not change. Indeed, while historical institutionalists have at one time championed a theory of “shock and crisis” to explain radical changes to existing rules and regulations, recent scholarship have pointed to the gradual, “endogenous” changes that could occur even when “formal-legal ramifications remain unaltered.”<sup>35</sup> Scholars have located these changes to the unintended consequences of policies, the “layering” of different institutions within a system, and the “conversion” of institutions to new uses and functions.<sup>36</sup> The changes that occur within the PSP results, on the one hand, from rectifying challenges that were inherent to the practice and, on the other hand, the modularity of the Program to serve diverse political objectives.

For one, new developments in counterinsurgency or propaganda efforts—occurring largely outside of the internal logic of the PSP—allowed “political study” to be repurposed and acquire different functions. Under those initiatives that were intended for broader populations, the practice was utilized not only in bureaucracies, but also villages, schools, and other sites of public gatherings. For another, the Program was revived and rectified as a result of changes to administrative leadership. The rise and fall of different regimes across the Republican era affected the functioning of the Program and, although each regime appealed to Republican anticommunist ideology, different regimes emphasized different aspects of the Program, ultimately changing how the Program was implemented and configured. The concern for special training of PSP discussion leaders during the First Republic, for example, was replaced by a more decentralized “Discussion Movement” during Directorate rule which omitted the need for special PSP cadres. This concern was revived during the Second Republic, elevating the training of specialized cadres to a heightened level of importance and instituting new sets of expectations.

While changes occurred to the PSP across the Republican era, it also aided the survival of the Program despite the turmoil of the nation’s history. Indeed, this “adaptability”—a component of institutional stability that Huntington first pointed out—was essential for the continuation of the Program. Because the practice could be deployed so widely and under different historical contexts, it became a regular, routinized, and legitimized aspect of administrative life. Throughout its history, the practice acquired an ideological “value” that was not easily dismissed, compelling new regimes to appropriate prior PSP forms and structures and retuning the practice to serve the new goals and aims. As an expected component of Republican administrative functions, the question for subsequent state-builders was not the necessity of the Program, but rather how to expand, develop, and increase its efficiency.

Below, this chapter, firstly, details the history of institutionalization of political study as a legitimized pedagogical practice of the Republican state. It will focus on the continuous efforts by the orchestrators of the PSP to formulate and maintain a pedagogical program that would

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<sup>35</sup> Edward Anthony Koning, “The Three Institutionalisms and Institutional Dynamics: Understanding endogenous and exogenous change,” *Journal of Public Policy* 36, no.4 (2016), 639-664.

<sup>36</sup> Kellee S. Tsai, “Adaptive Informal Institutions and Endogenous Institutional Change in China,” *World Politics* 59, no.1 (2006), 116-141.

serve the political-socializing ambitions of the Republican state. Modifications to the program were compelled by not only the changing imperatives of the state over the course of the Republican history but was also influenced by participants who responded differently to pedagogical techniques and state ideas. Indeed, to sustain the Program, it was necessary to incorporate critiques and criticisms into the Program's function.

Secondly, having established the internal dynamics of the PSP, the chapter then moves to build a contextual framework to situate the Program. The chapter argues that the PSP existed within what Joiner and Jumper aptly referred to as "the regime's propaganda network."<sup>37</sup> While different institutions played different functions for the Republic state, major state initiatives required mobilization of multiple ministries, of which informational ministries and the PSP played the central and leading role. The reach of the PSP into different ministries allowed for inter-ministerial collaboration and the sharing of a common ideological discourse. This centralization of objectives, agendas, and narratives paved the way for an anticommunist political culture to be constructed in South Vietnam while simultaneously normalized and legitimized political study as a regular practice within state organs. As the binding agent within this "propaganda network," the PSP was particularly unique for its inter-ministerial positionality, stability across the Republic, regularity of function, and modular use value applicable under different settings. Such characteristics were emphasized by the orchestrators of the Program who had a profound belief in the necessity of proper, systematic, and routinized operations. Throughout its lifespan, the PSP developed into a fine-tuned, routine practice to which the Republican state invested tremendous resources and effort.

#### THE INTERMEDIARIES OF IDEOLOGY

The core of the PSP was the study session. It was in these sessions that content crafted by the highest echelons of the regime's ideologues were disseminated downward to the ordinary administrative staff, secretaries, policemen, soldiers, and accountants of the state. The study session, thus, was the "site" in which ideological work occurred. What transpired during these sessions were of the utmost importance for the PSP to operate as a vehicle for the ideological work of the Republican state. Throughout the Republican era, this fact was not lost on the orchestrators of the program who took great lengths to ensure the regular, systematic, and proper enactment of the study session.

As a tool of the Republican pedagogical state, the PSP relied primarily on presenters and session organizers drawn from the various administrative organs to disseminate state messages. The task of these selected personnel was to transform often abstract ideals evident in delivered study materials into accessible knowledge for members of their own bureaucracy. Proper training of these individuals was viewed as an essential task since the initiation of the Program. Indeed, when the political study program was first initialized on August 8<sup>th</sup> of 1955, state organs were directed to send representatives to the 2-day nationwide training sessions hosted by the Ministry of Information. During these sessions, administrative personnel studied the foundational ideological materials of the CDTC. From there, those trained returned to their respective organs to establish individual CDTC directing bodies and initiated the conduct of regular sessions based on the topics acquired during their training.

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<sup>37</sup> Joiner, Charles A. and Roy Jumper, "Organizing Bureaucrats: South Viet Nam's National Revolutionary Civil Servant's League," *Asian Survey* 3(4), 1963: 203-215.

Per requirement of the Minister of Information, attendees must, firstly, be those with “firm thoughts and ideals” and, second, be in positions of ideological leadership in the CDTC.<sup>38</sup> Despite the ideological criteria the Minister of Information requested, the few selected to attend these training courses were unfortunately lower-level aides in a bureaucratic organ.<sup>39</sup> Dissatisfied, Trần Chánh Thành sent a letter to Diệm requesting that the Prime Minister distribute a directive demanding that the newly established directive bodies in charge of the CDTC activities and political study in each organ be “consolidated” with “capable and responsible” individuals. Efforts to study CDTC materials must be taken seriously and seen as paramount.<sup>40</sup> Two days later, the Diệm did just that making it mandatory that all government organs participate in the CDTC.<sup>41</sup> From late August to October of that year, regular study sessions and CDTC directive bodies were established in virtually every organ of the state.<sup>42</sup>

This initial crop of bureaucrats as early carriers of the state’s message, however, would soon be replaced by a new generation of specially trained cadres oriented to matters of the communist denunciation. Beginning in early 1956, the Central Directive Committee of the CDTC—headed by the Minister of Information—sought to transfer the successes in establishing political study sessions, directive committees, and regular CDTC activities within bureaucratic organs to that of the general populace. Since August of 1955, the regime had placed ideological weight on transforming the “work habits” of the civil servant. These civil servants were to no longer be simple cogs within a bureaucratic machine but rather a governmental “cadre” who had “resolute thoughts,” was firm in his commitment to the state and rejection of communism, and was enthusiastically willing to participate in all affairs of the nation.<sup>43</sup> To broaden the reach of the CDTC, the Minister of Information sought to draw on this segment of government cadres in the hopes of forming a dedicated staff whose responsibility would be to enact the CDTC outside of the capitol center. In 1956, the Central Directive Committee inaugurated training courses to cultivate a cohort of “core cadres.” Selected for this specialized training were civil servants who not only came recommended by their individual organs, but who had demonstrated political contribution to the anticommunist project.

By May of 1956, governmental personnel had more than a year to prove their political mettle in the CDTC. Those who demonstrate contribution to the anticommunist project were awarded with ranked accolades based on their participation in three primary political campaigns: the condemnation of the Geneva Accords, the General Referendum against Bao Dai in October of 1955, and the National Assembly elections in March of 1956. Recommendations for accolades entailed virtually all ranks and organs of the state, stretching from typist secretaries to 1<sup>st</sup> class

<sup>38</sup> CV Số 1468-BTT/VP dated 8.4.1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII.

<sup>39</sup> Qualifying his request, Trần Chánh Thành suggested that ministries send their “office managers, vice directors, and general secretaries.” CV số 1477-BTT/VP dated 8.4.1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII.

<sup>40</sup> CV Số 184-BTT/VP/M dated 8.23.1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII.

<sup>41</sup> CV số 45-TT dated 8.25.1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII.

<sup>42</sup> CV 184-BTT/VP on Aug. 23, 1955, Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII. Diệm lent his support in a directive No. 45-TT on Aug. 25, 1955.

<sup>43</sup> “Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ Nói Chuyện với các Công Chức Tại Dinh Độc Lập ngày 8-8-55.” Folder No. 29164. *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII.

privates, police officers to road-inspection supervisors, public school instructors to departmental directors.<sup>44</sup> Along with contributions in matters of mobilization, protest organization, counterinsurgency activities, and cultural production, many individuals were nominated for honors because of their role in establishing, organizing and presenting for political study within their jurisdiction.<sup>45</sup>

Most individuals were nominated for the ranks of “preliminary cadre” *cán bộ sơ bộ* and core cadre” *cán bộ nòng cốt*. Very few were nominated for the two highest honors of the accolades system: “Warrior” *Chiến Sĩ* and “Hero” *Anh Hùng*. These higher honors were often relegated for individuals who already held a high position within an administrative organ. Those who were nominated to be “cadres” were often lower-ranking staff, including public middle school instructors, accountants, secretaries, and road inspection supervisors. These nominations were sent to the CDTC Central Directive Committee for review. For some governmental organs, only the political resumes of individuals were sent in, requesting that the directing body assign accolades accordingly. The Department of Administration in the province of Vĩnh Long sent in 8 nominations without designating these individuals for any specific honor. They were simply “personnel who demonstrated excellence in the CDTC.” 7 of the 8 were nominated for their service as presenters in CDTC study sessions. Nguyễn Văn Lịch, a document drafter, was nominated for being a “presenter who was determined to exterminate communism and has voluntarily condemned in front of many individuals the evil sins of the communist.” Nominations from urban centers demonstrate similar patterns. Hà Khác Chử, a staff member in the Department of Fisheries in Saigon was nominated for the rank of “preliminary cadre” for his “ideals” and “firm spirit in service of all national movements. He attended “ideological training” courses, developed study materials, and was an “enthusiastic” presenter for CDTC study sessions.<sup>46</sup>

This CDTC accolades initiative provided a documented resume for those who were to be selected to be trained as “core cadres.” A prerequisite for such a position in the CDTC was that individuals must have demonstrated conviction by surpassing the “trials” accompanying duties assigned to them by CDTC directive bodies. It was only after displaying contribution to the Campaign that an individual could attend general political training and receive the basic title of “preparatory cadre” *cán bộ dự bị*. After a time in service to the directive committee of their jurisdiction, the individual can be recommended for ideological training held by the Central Directive Committee. To be considered for the training, the individual must undergo a review of personal history, contributions, and ideological commitment. If the cadre is selected for ideological training, the completion of the course will raise the individual to the rank of “core cadre.” Furthermore, core cadres must be individuals who received commendations from at least

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<sup>44</sup> The available records on the CDTC accolade initiative demonstrates that it had a national reach, with nominations coming from rural provinces like Rạch Gia and Gò Công, as well more urban centers like Cần Thơ, Vũng Tàu, and Saigon.

<sup>45</sup> Some had demonstrated their potentials in crafting anticommunist poetry or short stories, others excelled at protest organizing and popular mobilization, and still others (particularly members of the police and armed forces) engaged in counterinsurgency activities to weed out communist activists and sympathizers.

<sup>46</sup> Collated from reports on nominated persons for CDTC accolades in Folder No. F 6-57/2425. *Hồ Sơ về việc tuyên dương công trạng và tổ chức các buổi học tập chính trị của Ban Chỉ Đạo CDTC năm 1956*. Tòa Đại Biểu Chính Phủ Nam Phần (1945-1959), TTLTQGII.

2 high ranking members of their bureaucratic organ who will be held responsible for their later activities.<sup>47</sup>

These cadres were responsible for furthering the aims of the CDTC through political activities within the populace. They were to aid in the organizing of CDTC directive bodies within villages, wards, civil organizations, religious groups, etc.<sup>48</sup> Some, particularly those who demonstrated capabilities in matters of public speaking and political presentation, came to be members of a mobile team of presenters that Trần Chánh Thành formed in mid-1956. These individuals were expected to research and develop their own materials for dissemination when they are called upon to present at sessions. These presenters could be switched and called upon by different administrative organs to conduct presentations on their area of expertise.<sup>49</sup> Others undoubtedly found the CDTC to be a vehicle of upwards mobility, attaining bureaucratic rank and political recognition based on their contributions to CDTC ideological work.

Core cadres, however, were not only propagators of the regime's ideology to the populace. Because of their bureaucratic ties, they were also leading agents of the CDTC within their respective organs and aided the proper functioning of study sessions as presenters and political study leaders. CDTC activities nationwide were also inspected by these core cadres who served as "persons" *nhân* of the Campaign whose responsibility is to ensure that all organizations "enact and maintain the direction of the movement." These inspectorates were required to have "a revolutionary spirit" cauterized by experiences of "sacrifice and endurance of hardship." This meant they had either been properly trained and demonstrated their capabilities through the discussed contributions to the Campaign or were "victims of the authoritarian communist regime and have a spirit of hatred against the communists."<sup>50</sup>

Apart from imparting ideological knowledge to participants, sessions also served to "correct" erroneous thoughts—a task taken up by CDTC cadres. One reported example is a claim made by a student that "The Viet Cong regime is free and democratic. The Viet Cong have a powerful force, many weapons, and righteousness." This was "corrected" through the presentation of "evidence," particularly the various atrocities committed by the communists. This "evidence" came not only through the various news reports and study materials, but also through the spoken testimonies of "brothers and sisters who are victims of the Viet Cong."<sup>51</sup> Through these forms of oral testimonies, political study sessions were also sites during the CDTC where individuals professed "lived experiences" as evidence of communist crime and atrocities.

Among the popularly studied subjects during the CDTC-era was "The Evil Sins of the Communists." Originally a PSP study material distributed in the national conference held August of 1955, it became a general topic upon which individual administrative organs developed and

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<sup>47</sup> "Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 Của Giai Đoạn 1 Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc." Folder No. 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Trần Chánh Thành called this group "Thuyết Trình Đoàn." CV số 2232-HĐTC/TT dated 8.6.1956 and CV số 2299-HĐTC/TT/TTr dated 8.24.1956 in Folder No. 20030, "Hồ Sơ v/v tổ chức học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958." PTTĐICH.

<sup>50</sup> "Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 Của Giai Đoạn 1 Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc." Folder No. 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>51</sup> "Báo Cáo Tổng Kết của Ban Chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng tại Phủ Tổng Thống" on Sept. 27, 1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, TTLTQGII.

expanded through modified versions of the same document. During study sessions, individuals who migrated from the north were encouraged to contribute their own “testimony” to the discussion.<sup>52</sup> Some testimonials used for “evidence” of these “evil sins” were transcribed like that of a man from Quảng Nam Province who testified to witnessing communists killing a woman in the village of Xuyên Tây on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 1950.<sup>53</sup> Other testimonies were nameless and were used in longer pieces like one utilized by the General Office of Migration in August of 1955. The piece tells the migratory journey of 4 families of fishermen from Quỳnh Lư, a village in the North, who tried a total of 6 times before escaping by boat to the South.<sup>54</sup>

Given the political aims of the CDTC and the important role that the PSP was designed to play in the Campaign, the delegation of who would be the ideological intermediaries of the regime was not a task taken lightly. Individuals could not simply elect themselves to become presenters or political study leaders. They must obtain the recommendation of their administrative superiors and demonstrate commitment to the anticommunist project. These presenters were first and foremost CDTC cadres and their task was to ensure the expansion of the CDTC and the proper function of study sessions. Indeed, if the *raison d’être* of the Republic was its stance against communism, upon these cadres rests the ideological legitimacy of the regime.

Forming a dedicated cohort who could be drawn upon to direct and present also dealt with the endemic issues of “enthusiasm” and participation faced in the enactment of the program. Early on, organizers of study sessions in the administration had sought to incorporate a participatory element to its operations. Any members of an organ could be asked to present or to speak during sessions. This, however, faced resistance from wary governmental workers who saw their forced participation in the PSP as a means of punishment. One internal memo from the Representative Assembly notes that “enthusiasm” *hấp dẫn* was not evident in study sessions because organizers were “dictatorial...select[ing] individuals who did not know how to eat or speak [lack of social etiquettes] to the podium, making them believe that going up to the podium was a form of punishment, more than an opportunity for them to denounce the communists.”<sup>55</sup>

When it came to participation, complaints were rampant. One memo addressed to all departments and offices belonging to the Office of the Prime Minister in August of 1955 complained that “a small number of personnel, rather than entering the study session, got together to converse outside the alley.”<sup>56</sup> Not only did students skip study sessions, when they did show, some students had not read their materials beforehand and some did not even take

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<sup>52</sup> Guidelines for stage 3 of the CDTC laid out that for the study of the “Evil Sins of the Communists,” “the contents of this part must be abundant, must completely utilize the capabilities of those victims of the communist regime.” “Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 Của Giai Đoạn 1 Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc.” Folder No. 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>53</sup> Nguyễn, Quang Ninh, “Hành Động Dã Man Của Việt Cộng” circa July 1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Thống, TTLTQGII.

<sup>54</sup> “Đồng Bào Bắc Việt Vẫn Tiếp Tục Thoát Lý Vùng Việt Cộng, Vào Nam Tìm Tự Do” circa August 1955; Folder No. 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>55</sup> CV 6.988/2-NCT from the Representative Assembly of South Vietnam on Nov. 21, 1955.

<sup>56</sup> CV 46-PTT/ĐL on Aug. 30 1955 in Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Thống, TTLTQGII).

notes.<sup>57</sup> The November 1955 guidelines for CDTC political study made clear that students must not “view political study as a pastime.” They must pay attention and dedicate themselves to studying the material. They were encouraged to express their opinions and stave off from criticizing one another.<sup>58</sup>

Multiple solutions were adopted throughout the First Republic but were met with varying success. One solution, in response to the reluctance of those who viewed participation as a form of “punishment,” was to only allow trained cadres to come up to the podium, particularly when it comes to presentation. Doing so would allow sessions to be more “enthusiastic” because these individuals knew how to “speak eloquently, know when to place emphasis to draw in the audience, when to speak freely so those who listen can easily understand.”<sup>59</sup> Another solution was simply that the bureaucratic superiors encourage their personnel to be “self-aware” of their own conduct.<sup>60</sup>

However, the responsibility to energize sessions ultimately fell onto the presenters. These individuals were expected to not only master the ideological materials and present them in an accessible way, they were also required to ensure “enthusiastic” engagement with these materials amongst PSP participants. Early guidelines dictated that presenters must not only “correctly” present on the materials at hand, but also ensure that the contents of presentations can be “easily remembered” by their audience and that presenters have proper “methods and experience.”<sup>61</sup> In 1958, the PSP charter suggested that “presenters [use]...the black board, maps, pictures, statistics, concrete examples, realistic stories, the experience of different nations, etc” to make study sessions more “enthusiastic.” Understanding that “the success of study session” was due to “the ingenuity of the presenters,” the reconfiguration dictated that organs must be “careful in electing presenters” who had “cultural aptitude and know how to enthusiastically converse.”<sup>62</sup> Other modifications were also recommended including organizing time for “cultural activities” during periods of conflict or when “it seems that everyone is tired,”<sup>63</sup> integrating occupation-related topics to be used alternatively with politics-related materials,<sup>64</sup> and invited talks on non-political topics to liven up the quotidian drab of indoctrination.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Some simply lacked any effort. (“Báo Cáo Tổng Kết của Ban Chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tô Cộng tại Phủ Tổng Thống” on Sept. 27, 1955. Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tô Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Thống, TTLTQGII).

<sup>58</sup> “Học Tập Chính Trị” from CDTC National Conference held on Nov. 12, 1955, Folder No. 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tô Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tô Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII. See also CV 307/HĐTC/TT circa 1957 by Trần Chánh Thành who states that “During study sessions, by accident or by intent, [students] had criticized individuals on issues that have no relations to Communist Denunciation, or that they entered into Communist Denunciation but bring up issues that relate in a superficial manner, deceptive towards communist denunciation.”

<sup>59</sup> CV 6.988/2-NCT from the Representative Assembly of South Vietnam on Nov. 21, 1955.

<sup>60</sup> CV 46-PTT/ĐL on Aug. 30 1955 in Folder No. 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tô Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Thống, TTLTQGII).

<sup>61</sup> “Học Tập Chính Trị” from CDTC National Conference held on Nov. 12, 1955, Folder No. 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tô Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tô Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>62</sup> “Chương Trình Học Tập” attachment of CV Số 105-TTP/VP dated 18.8.1958 in Folder No. 3031, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*. Bộ Y Tế.

<sup>63</sup> “Học Tập Chính Trị” from CDTC National Conference held on Nov. 12, 1955, Folder No. 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tô Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tô Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>64</sup> 15-TT/TN on Oct. 4, 1956

<sup>65</sup> The Ministry of Economics, for example, invited a journal editor to discuss the present trends in theatric arts in November of 1958 (CV Số 13560/BKT/HT dated 11.18.1958 in Folder No. 20030, PTTĐỊCH, *Hồ Sơ v/v tổ cwhcs*

Presenters and political study organizers often had to go to additional training courses in the attempt to rectify these issues. After the cessation of the CDTC in 1958, the Minister of Information continued to host occasional conferences to reinforce presentational aptitude and instruct active presenters on newly drafted study materials or review older ones.<sup>66</sup> Beginning in 1961, Ngô Đình Nhu and other top officials of the regime took on this task to train cadres who would be versed on matters relating to Personalism, progress and development, and the Strategic Hamlet program.<sup>67</sup>

Regardless of these implemented measures, major issues like enthusiasm and proper discussion remained an endemic problem for political study. In the 1958 reconfiguration of the PSP, the section on “Students” made clear that although participants were free to express their opinions, they must not “go off topic...repeat ideas...waste time...[and] must summarize.” Furthermore, they “absolutely must not abuse study sessions to chastise other people.”<sup>68</sup> In 1959, Ngô Đình Nhu required that political study organizers must cultivate an environment in which students can “freely express their opinions” to deal with the notable lack of enthusiasm during sessions.<sup>69</sup> Attendance, however, appears to have been resolved. Reports of study sessions from 1958 onward demonstrates that, for the most part, administrative personnel did show up to sessions as attendance was documented and the only valid excuses for absence were community service or hospitalization.<sup>70</sup>

Despite contributions to the foundations of political study practices in the Republic, Trần Chánh Thành’s leadership—and subsequently that of the CDTC—began slowly coming to an end as the leaders of the Republic were reorienting their political outlook towards issues of development, internationalism, and American aid. In 1958, a major reconfiguration of the PSP began a progressive offsetting of the ideological value of the CDTC cadre. The new PSP policy, nevertheless, sought to maintain preexisting operational standards by integrating CDTC cadre as the Rank 1 members of the new system.<sup>71</sup> This integration was largely to maintain ideological

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*học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*). The Ministry of Health scheduled two presentations by medical experts during their general study assembly in June and July of 1960—one on tuberculosis and another on health inspections in Taiwan and Japan (CV Số 82-YT/VP-HT dated 6.21.1960 and CV Số 86-YT/VP-HT dated 7.25.1960 in Folder No. 3031, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*. Bộ Y Tế).

<sup>66</sup> In his last year in office Trần Chánh Thành hosted a few study conferences including one on “The Political Direction of the Republic of Vietnam” on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January 1960 (CV Số 14/HTTU-TT dated 1.14.1960) and, perhaps his last major activity in the PSP, a conference on “The Strategy of Peaceful Coexistence of the Communists” on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September (CV số 87-HTTU/TT dated 9.24.1960). Folder No. 20357, PTTĐỊCH. *Tài liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dẫn học tập “đường lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” năm 1960*.

<sup>67</sup> Collated from reported PSP activities in the NRM and regarding the Strategic Hamlet Program in *Chiến Sĩ* for issues 84 (Jan. 1962)-93 (Dec. 1962).

<sup>68</sup> “Chương Trình Học Tập” attachment of CV Số 105-TTP/VP dated 18.8.1958 in Folder No. 3031, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*. Bộ Y Tế.

<sup>69</sup> “Vấn Đề Học Tập: Lược Thuật buổi nói chuyện của O. Cố Vấn Chánh Trị ngày 10-12-1959,” Folder No. 20358, PTTĐỊCH. *Tài liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v “nhận xét về âm mưu sửa đổi hiến pháp của Việt Cộng” năm 1960*.

<sup>70</sup> Collated from reports on political study sessions from Folder No. 3031, Bộ Y Tế. *Hồ Sơ v/v Học tập Chính trị năm 1958-1974* and three folders on reports for year 1961 of organs relating to the General Directorate of Police and Security for May-June (Folder No. 20530), July-August (Folder No.20531), and November to December (Folder No. 20532) in PTTĐỊCH.

<sup>71</sup> CV Số 712/HĐTC/TT dated 9.2.1958 in Folder No. 20030, PTTĐỊCH. *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ chức học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958*.



consistency and regularity of study sessions while ideological power was shifting from that of the Ministry of Information and the CDTC to that of the Office of the President and a new vision for Vietnamese development.

Indeed, the tides of ideological leadership were turning against the CDTC-forged cadre. Of the 94 individuals selected to serve as presenters for the Ministry of Economics' political study after the 1958 reconfiguration, 18 were former CDTC cadres, 42 were high ranking officials, 28 were personnel who demonstrated capability, and 6 were to form an office for political study within the ministry. This is indicative of the change in ideological leadership during the period.<sup>72</sup> High-ranked bureaucratic officials composed of almost half of those selected to be the conveyers of the state ideals. If ideological leadership laid in the cadre during the CDTC, the 1958 policy restructured that responsibility in accordance with existing bureaucratic hierarchy. Leaders of state organs were not simply administrators, they were to also be ideological leaders who were responsible for the political education of their staff. Indeed, PSP study sessions were to be led by department chairs and office managers who too would take their turn as ideological presenters.

By 1962, CDTC cadres were no longer prioritized in the ideological efforts of the Republican state. By then, Trần Chánh Thành had been replaced, the Ministry of Information disbanded, and Ngô Đình Nhu had taken the helm of ideological training and dissemination. A new generation of cadres were then being trained versed in not only anticommunism, but also that of Personalism and the ideological fundamentals of the new flagship project of the Republic's later years: the Strategic Hamlet. As the Minister of the Interior argued in a May 1962 speech, anticommunism and resoluteness against communism is a given at the present time. Many cadres of the past, however, have abused their privileges. These cadres, however, should not be excised from the government, but should either be retrained in accordance to the necessities of the Personalist Revolution. The new cadre, as a first step, must "nourish the spirit of progress," "study and absorb the elements of progress in the Strategic Hamlet design."<sup>73</sup>

Throughout 1962, Ngô Đình Nhu and his team delegated to enact the Strategic Hamlet Program engaged in ideological work in very much the same manner that Trần Chánh Thành had done seven years before. Training courses were held in various localities to form "Strategic Hamlet Cadres," and these cadres were expected to return to their respective jurisdiction to enact the new policies of the regime. While most attending these courses would engage in the actual work of forming strategic hamlets in the rural countryside, some—being members of administrative organs—would return to be conveyors of the strategic hamlet policy in PSP sessions.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, for 1962, the Strategic Hamlet dominated PSP study topics and by

<sup>72</sup> "Bản Phân Công Thuyết Trình Viên Các Cấp [Bộ Kinh Tế]" dated 9.26.1958 in Folder No. 20030, PTTĐICH. *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ chức học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958.*

<sup>73</sup> "Buổi nói chuyện của Ông Bộ Trưởng Nội Vụ Bùi Văn Lương về Ấp Chiến Lược" in *Chiến Sĩ* issue 87 (June 1962), pp. 11-17.

<sup>74</sup> Collated from reported PSP activities in the NRM and regarding the Strategic Hamlet Program in *Chiến Sĩ* for issues 84 (Jan. 1962)-93 (Dec. 1962). See also session report from The Ministry of Administration which cites the presenter for sessions on an issue related to the Strategic Hamlet was trained in the 4<sup>th</sup> Cohort of Strategic Hamlet Cadres ran by Ngô Đình Nhu ("Biên Bản Buổi Học Tập ngày 7-3-1963, hồi 16 giờ tại Phòng Hội Nha Tổng Thơ Ký Bộ Công Chánh," Folder No. 1600, BCCGT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập đề tài của Bác Sĩ Trần Kim Tuyến về vấn đề học tập năm 1963*)

September of 1963, the strategic hamlet model was utilized to reorganize the structure of political study.

As demonstrated above, the importance of these “intermediaries of ideology” were not lost on the orchestrators of the PSP. As the presenters and session organizers of the program, these individuals were the focal pivot that transformed the ideals of the Republican state into accessible messages for most bureaucratic servants. PSP presenters were expected to not only deliver the state’s message, but also master the material to a degree that they are able to address existing questions, concerns, and criticisms from their audience. The delivery of this message was carefully crafted through not only ideological training, but also in the hierarchal format through which these presenters functioned. Reports of presentations on the same topic differed only slightly. Prior to 1958, Trần Chánh Thành ensured consistency through his mobile group of presenters and the rigid selection of CDTC cadres. With the 1958 reconfiguration, policy dictated that before any presentations were conducted in Rank 2 sessions, a document summarizing and pointing out important aspects and passages of the study material were collectively drafted by members in Rank 1. By 1961, however, ideas flowed downward even more narrowly. PSP practice in police and security organs, for example, began with presentations from the Director of the Police Force (the highest-ranking member of the organ) in Rank 1 sessions. The very same presentation given by the Director was delivered almost verbatim to individuals in Rank 2, ensuring that even if different individuals presented on the topic, the same message could systematically be conveyed.<sup>75</sup>

Through its many changes, reiterations, and modifications, the program became a finely tuned ideological mechanism delivering standardized ideological messages to a broader population. The effects of this process to standardize and systematize political study as an embedded practice within the Republican administration was long-lasting. Despite the overwhelming popular opposition to the PSP or anything related to the despised authoritarian Diêmist regime, the 20-month hiatus following the November Coup was not completely devoid of political study activities. These activities came at the beckoning of a small number of administrators who saw the necessity of the practice in cultivating patriotism, anticommunism, and generating support for newly formed administrations.

Five days following the November Coup, the Office of the Premier led by newly appointed Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ issued a memo cancelling all PSP sessions scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> of November “until a later decided date.”<sup>76</sup> Little evidence indicates that political study was systematically reimplemented after this cancelling, apart from a government-wide collective study conference in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of November regarding the official statement given by the Revolutionary Military Council immediately following the successful coup. In a December review of the PSP by the Premier Office calling for the enactment of the PSP, despite known opposition to the practice. As argued, “the practice of study...requires no major criticism if implemented correctly and in reality is greatly beneficial” for anticommunism and Republican policies. According to the report, “popular opinion likens [the Program] to a form of brainwashing and is currently being in accordance to the spirit of the November Revolution.”

<sup>75</sup> Collated from reports on political study sessions from three folders on reports for year 1961 of organs relating to the General Directorate of Police and Security for May-June (Folder No. 20530), July-August (Folder No.20531), and November to December (Folder No. 20532) in PTTĐICH.

<sup>76</sup> CV 151-CĐ/PTT dated 11-6-1963, *Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trang giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29293.

Nevertheless, the review proposed the reimplementation of the program, focusing on “popularizing” the administration’s policies and ideals. The review argued that “obviously...[the reconfigured program] will absolutely excise all forms of brainwashing, one-sided study materials, and especially fallacious policies of the old regime.”<sup>77</sup> Despite calling for the reconfiguration of the program, there is little evidence to suggest that a systematically state-directed pedagogical program was actually revived during the 3-months administration of Dương Văn Minh.

In May of 1964, another attempt was made. The Ministry of Information—then headed by Phạm Thái—appealed to General-Premier Nguyễn Khánh to reenact the PSP. According to Phạm Thái, “the practice of political study, compared to other psychological warfare practices, have a deeper function and is longer lasting,” and would contribute to “developing standpoint and increase the aptitude of the people.” Emphasis should be placed on “creat[ing] an atmosphere of democratic discussion that is enthusiastic and constructive.” Furthermore, acknowledging the association that the term *học tập* “study” has with the former regime, the Minister of Information suggested that the term *thảo luận* “discussion” be used instead.<sup>78</sup>

Unlike the proposal of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ in December of 1963, the suggestions by Phạm Thái did not completely fall on deaf ears. In July of 1964, the practice of political study was utilized as a component of what would become an annual ideological effort on the part of the Republic of Vietnam: the commemoration of “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July.<sup>79</sup> Political study for the event was situated in broader mobilizing efforts ranging from a nationwide “competition” to develop art, music, poetry and traditional theatric skits (*cải lương*)<sup>80</sup> to hygienic cleanup of the streets to mass gatherings in which high ranking officials delivered emotionally laden speeches centering on the “10 Years of Communist Atrocities,” the communist-induced suffering of the Vietnamese people, and the resolution to militarily advance into North Vietnam (*Bắc Tiến* or Northward March) in hopes of quickly ending the war. Alongside fomenting nationwide anticommunist agitation, study sessions for the 1964 Day of National Resentment also sought to build legitimacy for the Khánh regime by utilizing materials that emphasizes the authoritarian nature of the First Republic, the failures of the previous administration under Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, and the economic, social, and political successes of the new administration. For the administration of Nguyễn Khánh, political study and affiliated ideological efforts were intended to ensure that citizens, particularly governmental personnel, “comprehend the important value of the [government’s] program for the progress of [our] people in the present and future.” Regurgitating the pedagogical vision of the First Republic, the

<sup>77</sup> “học tập trong giới công chức,” attached to CV 755-B-ĐUHC/NC5 dated 12-14-1963, Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trang giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29293.

<sup>78</sup> “tổ chức lại việc học tập trong cơ quan và ngoài nhân dân,” in CV 2643-BTT/TĐTL dated 5-8-1964, Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trang giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29293.

<sup>79</sup> See records of political study planning, associated activities, and session reports for the 1964 “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận* in *Tài liệu học tập của Sở Tác Mĩ Nhân ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, NCN, Fold. 855; *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế v/v học tập đề tài "Ngày Quốc Hận", "Cách mạng 01/11/1963" năm 1964*, TQT, Fold. 3585; *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, BCCGT, Fold. 1773.

<sup>80</sup> “Thông Cáo: Cuộc Thi Sáng Tác Văn Nghệ Do Nha Vô Tuyến Việt Nam Tổ Chức Ngày 20-7-1964,” dated 6/5/1964, BCCGT, *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*.

government cadre must “absorb the Revolutionary path, clearly understand the value, direction, and substance” of the new administration.<sup>81</sup>

This effort was in no way a complete revival of the program and was severely limited in scope. The available evidence suggests that deliberate efforts to reinstitutionalize the practice under Khánh was non-existent, partly because of the turmoil that would soon erupt following the 1964 Day of National Resentment commemoration. Indeed, within two weeks of the commemoration, the USS Maddox was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedoes in the Gulf of Tonkin, sparking a series of events that would ultimately culminate Khanh’s removal from political power. Throughout the 20 months following the collapse of the First Republic, study sessions were only sporadically held. The Bus Administration, for example, held discussion sessions in August centered on a memo by the Minister of the Interior regarding forced taxation of civil servants by communist infiltrators.<sup>82</sup> Study documents were developed for the National Day celebration for November 1<sup>st</sup> of 1964, but no documents exist to demonstrate that these materials were actually studied. Relatively limited events were planned for the first anniversary of the November Revolution was most likely due to the fact that this was the transitional period from the administration of Nguyễn Khánh to Trần Văn Hương and commemorative activities were overshadowed by an attack on Biên Hòa airbase.<sup>83</sup> And in April of 1965, the Ministry of Agriculture conducted study sessions on “The Fake Peace of the Viet Cong” amidst the controversy over peace movements plaguing the Quát administration.<sup>84</sup> Evidence does not suggest, however, that these studies went beyond that of the Agricultural Ministry.

Deliberate efforts to regularize and systematize political study only came after the PSP was formally reinstated. Following the 3-month preparatory phase which initiated the “Discussion Movement” in 1965, the Psychological Warfare Minister—Đình Trịnh Chính—lauded the project to be a success, stating that the program enacted “in accordance to an enthusiastic and open spirit” and requested that a more durable framework be established. This, however, masked the litany of concerns expressed by administrative personnel over military rule, national austerity, cessation of civil liberties and the delay of democratic development that came with the Directorate’s rise to power.<sup>85</sup> These discontents would manifest in a drop in PSP

<sup>81</sup> “CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HOẠT ĐỘNG CỦA CHÍNH PHỦ VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA,” attached to CV 1025-NV/HT dated 7/17/1964, NCN 855, *Tài liệu học tập của Sở Túc Mễ Nhân ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*.

<sup>82</sup> Tài liệu học tập của Nha Công Quản chuyên chở Sài Gòn về vấn đề việt cộng thu thuế công chức năm 1964, BCCGT, Fold. 1772.

<sup>83</sup> “Tài Liệu Hội Thảo: Cách Mạng 1-11-1963,” attached to CV 8124-BTT/TĐTL/PG dated 10-14-1964, *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế v/v học tập đề tài “Ngày Quốc Hận”, “Cách mạng 01/11/1963” năm 1964*, TQT, Fold. 3585. Some celebrations were reported, however. Though they were markedly more contained than what was seen for the “Day of National Resentment” commemoration in July. Most notably was a military parade and a dinner party held at Gia Long Palace in Saigon (“Half US jet bombers in Vietnam disabled: Guerrillas use mortars to attack airfield,” *The Guardian*, Nov 2, 1964; “Kỷ niệm đệ nhất chu niên cách mạng 1-11, Diễn binh tại bên Bạch Đằng,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 3, 1964; “Quốc Trưởng Phan Khắc Sữu chủ tọa cuộc diễn binh trang trọng và đơn giản,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 3, 1964; distributed news reports and editorials from Vietnamese Press Agency *Việt Tân Xã*, see *Tập bản tin VTX về lễ Quốc khánh ngày 01.11.1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 3134).

<sup>84</sup> “Cuộc Vận Động Hòa Bình Giả Tạo của Việt Cộng,” in CV 4076/CNNV/C dated 4-20-1965, *tài liệu học tập chính trị của Nha Canh Nông năm 1965*, NCN, Fold. 873

<sup>85</sup> On wage inequality between soldier and civil servants, see “Biên bản buổi hội thảo ngày 29.7.1965 hồi 17 giờ” in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589; collation of unanswered questions and complaints raised during study sessions associated with Kỳ’s policies see “Bản Giải

participation as the Struggle Movement erupted in early 1966. A review by Đinh Chính Trình in July reported the notable “poor performance” of discussion activities beginning with the month of February. For the month of March, only 2 ministries of 14 only 12 of the 50 provinces sent in mandatory reports on sessions. Those reports that were sent in were “extremely meager” and requested that Kỳ take initiative to ensure that future reports include assessment of “the depth and degree of success of the study materials.”<sup>86</sup> PSP activities, however, returned to normalcy after June following the defeat of rebel forces in Central Vietnam. Indeed, faced with the aftermath of a rebellion within its own ranks, the Kỳ administration sought to rebrand the military as the champions of democracy and took measures towards democratic reforms.

And with the General Information Program, beyond emphasizing that political study must be a “regular, obvious, and necessary activity,” the administration of Trần Thiện Khiêm placed tremendous resources into the training of rank 1 cadres in methods of presentation and propaganda. The extensive training program implemented by the General Information Program in 1970 sought to cultivate within the administrative personnel a sense of importance for political study activities but also to provide knowledge of the various strategies that could enhance participation and “enthusiasm.” From mid-July until the end of October 1970, 16 cohorts entailing more than 1,000 governmental personnel<sup>87</sup> underwent intensive training sessions, dwelling into not simply into ideological materials, but also the history of political study practices,<sup>88</sup> informational technology,<sup>89</sup> methods of public speaking,<sup>90</sup> rumor spreading,<sup>91</sup> and even how to draft a news report.<sup>92</sup> As political study underwent reconfiguration and the General Information Program prepared for nationwide expansion, these skills were deemed necessary for

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đáp thắc mắc về tài liệu hội thảo: ‘tình hình và nhiệm vụ trong giai đoạn mới,’” dated 9/29/1965 in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589.

<sup>86</sup> CV 159/BTTCH-CTTL dated 4/7/1966 in, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577.

<sup>87</sup> These individuals were selected from the 21 primary ministerial organs at the governmental center and were designated to take the knowledge acquired to restructure and properly implement political study in their respective organs. For the duration of the General Information Program, rank 1 cadres attended regular conferences prior to the mass distribution of political study materials to review learned topics as well as how to properly incorporate the new study materials into organ-specific study sessions. As rank 1 cadres were designated presenters for rank 2 sessions, these individuals trained for public speaking, studied precise talking-points in defense of the regime, and usage and utility of information technology (“Kiểm Điểm và Thống Nhất Tư Tưởng về một đường lối thực hiện công tác thông tin đại chúng,” PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*).

<sup>88</sup> “Bài thuyết trình về công tác hội thảo cơ quan trong lãnh vực thông tin đại chúng” to 2914/BTT/TTĐC/V dated 7/30/1970 and “tổ chức và hướng dẫn các buổi học tập, hội thảo,” PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*;

<sup>89</sup> “Kỹ thuật thông tin tuyên truyền,” and “Đề Tài: Tổ chức meeting biểu tình và chống biểu tình,” PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*;

<sup>90</sup> “nghệ thuật nói trước quần chúng” PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*;

<sup>91</sup> “Công tác mạn đàm ri tai,” PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*;

<sup>92</sup> “cách làm và phổ biến tuyên truyền phẩm” and “Thực hiện một bản tin” PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*;

the administrative men and women who would all be transformed into “information cadres” of the state.<sup>93</sup>

Moreover, strictures were placed on political study activities by placing direct responsibility for proper and regular political study on administrative heads. This meant that, in the provinces, the military officers who headed each province were required to not only submit monthly reports on study activities, these men were held accountable for organizing study sessions, scheduling topics of study, and ensuring that study sessions were regular and attended.<sup>94</sup> The 1970 reconfiguration, furthermore, reinforced attendance monitoring, re-dictated that excuses were only valid for community service or hospitalization, and demanded that political study be a priority in all state organs.<sup>95</sup> Additionally, propaganda dissemination was centralized through the national directive body, ensuring that materials crafted by local offices were vetted by the Ministry of Information prior to distribution.<sup>96</sup>

While influenced by broader modernist impulse and derivative of Personalist ideals, the survival of the PSP throughout the Republican Era was only possible through the conscious and deliberate efforts by state administrators who saw the value of the practice in generating political support, fomenting anticommunist fervor, and the sustaining patriotic sentiments. Indeed, the PSP was perpetually plagued with problems of participation and enthusiasm emanating from the lack of total control that PSP orchestrators had over their own participants. While these issues were never completely resolved, the historical records indicate tremendous efforts by different regimes to resolve these issues and ensure that political study was regular and routine in the everyday life of the administration. Moreover, the history of the PSP highlights the reutilization of not only the structural format by various administrations, but also specific strategies such as the routine reporting, attendance monitoring, and cadre training to maintain proper enactment of the Program. This effort on the part of Republican state helps explain the durability of the PSP despite the regime changes and political turmoil experienced in Republican history—an effort driven by the *view* that political study was a pedagogical strategy, indispensable to the success of the Republican experiment. For its orchestrators, the PSP was a vehicle through which capable and inspired cadres can be forged and it is this ideal that motivated constant and unrelenting efforts by regimes to control the internal workings of the practice.

This agentic historical process—one that is continually edged on by a *belief* in the moldability of the person—is what allowed political study to become an institutionalized practice of the Republican administration. The importance of this practice was evidently situated within the context of the anticommunist war and nation-building. As argued in a 1969 memo, “the *regular* organization of political study for cadres” is a necessity for “the collective victory in this

<sup>93</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v thực thi chương trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng,” circa Sep 1970, CV 1499/CTTL/KH/BĐ/CT dated 9/5/1970 and CV 110/BTT/CTTL/VP dated 9/4/1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

<sup>94</sup> CV 2574/PTH/BDPT/CT dated 8/15/1970, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*, PTTVNCH 30445; 42/UBTTĐC/T dated 8/31/1970, *Tổ chức các buổi học tập thông tin đại chúng tại Phủ Thủ Tướng năm 1970-1971*, PTTVNCH 30670.

<sup>95</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ v/v thực thi chương trình Thông Tin Đại Chúng,” circa Sep 1970, “Tổ chức và điều hành cơ cấu Thông Tin Đại Chúng,” “tổ chức và hướng dẫn các buổi học tập, hội thảo,” and CV 167/ĐV/PTH/BC dated 10/2/1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*.

<sup>96</sup> CV 111/BTT/CTTL/VP dated 9/4/1970, PTTVNCH 30445: *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970*

war for the just cause of self-defense and combating the communist infiltration.” It was imperative to transform “the entirety of the civil servant body...into political cadres with capability and spirit.” To do so would serve not only the reformation of the administration, but “has importance with regards to [military] strategy and urgency.”<sup>97</sup> The goal was to build a “strong and stable foundational force for the political struggle that is currently ensuing and will continue to develop in the period to follow.”<sup>98</sup> The vision scoped out in 1969 was one of ideological and practical endurance, for anticommunism and its corroborating practice of political study.

Such a vision, of course, was a replication of what came before. Under the Communist Denunciation Campaign, the goal was to ensure that “the movement deeply penetrated the subconscious of every person, of every class of the people.”<sup>99</sup> Political study was “necessary, basic, and the foundation of the movement” to ensure that the movement “grow, remain stable, and endure,” that foundation must be stable as well.<sup>100</sup> It is of little wonder that Phạm Thái would view political study as having “a deeper function and is longer lasting” than mere propaganda. The importance of the Program, as perceived by its orchestrators, lies in its ability to ensure ideological durability and its irreplaceable role in the war against communism. That belief worked to transform a novel practice at the start of the Republican era into an embedded institution by the Republic’s end—an achievement of routine and regulation.

Exploring the routinization and institutionalization of the PSP has aided in establishing the foundation of our analysis, for it was through the Program that state agents were cultivated, and, through these agents, the policies and ideals of the Republican state were enacted. However, to scope the breadth of ideological work in South Vietnam, we must explore how state messages reached not merely its state agents, but the broader population. While the PSP represents one of the quintessential mechanisms of the state’s pedagogical intents and actions, the discussions, study materials, activities in PSP sessions reinforced—and were reinforced—by broader political and ideological initiatives undertaken by the Republican state. The hegemonic development of South Vietnamese anticommunism emerged out of an aggregate of initiatives enveloping press censorship, legal measures against suspected communists and sympathizers, regular and systematic propaganda, and state-orchestrated mass campaigns. While parcel to overt and coercive forms of social control, political study also reflected activities within the Republican educational sector, including Civic and Moral courses in the South Vietnamese public-school system. The parallel goals of these methods established an informational infrastructure in which narratives in support of Republican anticommunism was simultaneously deployed alongside censorship and violence.

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<sup>97</sup> “Thông Tư Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ,” dated May 1969, PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>98</sup> CV 1355/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/21/1969, PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát Động Phong Trào Học Tập Trên Toàn Quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>99</sup> “Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 của Giai Đoạn I Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc,” dated 5/2/1956, PTUDCTN 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*

<sup>100</sup> “Ý NGHĨA VIỆC HỌC TẬP TỔ CỘNG VÀ THÁI ĐỘ HỌC TẬP,” circa 1956, PTUDCTN 52: *Về chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1955-1957 Tập 1: Tổ cộng năm 1955*

In examination of the broader “propaganda network” within which the PSP was situated, it is important to note the inter-ministerial nature of ideological work under the Republic.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, as the previous chapter has noted, the central directing body of the various iterations of the PSP was comprised of not only the Information Ministry—the consistent leadership in organizing and directing the Program—but also that of the Education Ministry, the Interior Ministry, and organs related to national defense. While informational state organs directed and controlled PSP activities administration wide, the spread of the program and its integration into the functions of various ministries also generated a shared belief by diverse governmental bodies of the pedagogical utility of the practice. The PSP was integrated as a component to various state projects that required cooperation from diverse organs, ranging from the Strategic Hamlet Program of the First Republic to efforts to mobilize for the war effort under the Second. This, firstly, speaks to the inter-ministerial character of ideological work and, secondly, the effects of non-informational state organs upon the operations of the PSP.

The chapter below situates political study within a broader “network” of propaganda and social coercion. Indeed, articulated below is the simultaneous service of the PSP to systematic state messaging and social control under the Republic. As Republican regimes organized mass rallies and engaged in mass propaganda to rile anticommunist fervor, they also imposed legal sanctions, conducted counter-insurgency warfare, and enacted surveillance and monitoring against communists and their sympathizers—domains of the Interior Ministry, legal entities, National Defense, intelligence, and paramilitary units.

The effect of these conjoined measures was the manifestation of an anticommunist political culture. That is, Republican ideological work cultivated a political environment in which anticommunist activities and messages were encouraged, normalized, and socially accepted. Under the Republic, this inter-ministerial “network” was an infrastructure of ideological coordination, resulting in the standardization of state messages that was consistent across numerous levels and branches of government and the multiplicity of state-directed activities and campaigns. Thus, the reasons for why South Vietnam rejected the provisions of the Geneva Accords—an anticommunist narrative onto itself—was similarly articulated in newspapers, literary organs, cultural productions, by rural cadres as well as their ministerial superiors in the Capitol, or during study sessions regardless if held in Ministry of Transportation or the Ministry of National Defense. This ideological rationale justified public denunciation of communism and their “atrocities” by both state officials and civilians and provided a framework for slogans, chants, and songs at mass rallies. And that ideological rationale warranted the enactment of anticommunist laws, legal decrees, martial law, pacification campaigns, and the arrest, detention, and execution of communist enemies. The exploration of history and ideological substance of the “Geneva Narrative” and other narratives will be the subject of the next chapter.

#### THE BROADER “PROPAGANDA NETWORK”

During the First Republic, study material utilized in the PSP came from a variety of sources. Study materials often included publications, articles, and texts drawn from non-

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<sup>101</sup> While Joiner and Jumper’s work focused on the highly regulated environment of censorship, surveillance, and control evident during the First Republic, their approach points to the importance of journalism, mass campaigns, non-governmental organizations, and public discourse in the reinforcement of state ideals and legitimacy.



governmental organizations, news agencies and journals, and state-directed organs designed to enact and proselytize the policies of the state. For the first three years of the Diệm regime, the epicenter of discursive control was the Ministry of Information. Trần Chánh Thành served not only as the organ's minister but also held the title of the Chairman of the National Revolutionary Movement and the Director of the People's Central Committee for the Communist Denunciation Campaign. Indeed, prior to his exit from governmental affairs, Trần Chánh Thành was key to the management of information flow from the summit of the ideological hierarchy to the broader population. This unity between various levels of the ideological hierarchy was later overtaken by Ngô Đình Nhu and his entourage<sup>102</sup> who bounded newly formed groups, like the Republican Youths (Thanh Niên Cộng Hòa) and the Strategic Hamlet cadres, to the existing network.

Established during the early years of the Republic was an informational apparatus that dispensed similar ideological messages through multiple textual mediums existing at both the governmental and civil societal levels. Trần Chánh Thành, however, did not alone control the management of information flow. While the Ministry of Information laid at the center of that “propaganda network” which developed and disseminated ideology, the CLP operated behind the scenes directing and managing the broader order of South Vietnamese politics. Alongside Trần Chánh Thành, the Director of Police and Security—Nguyễn Văn Y, Dr. Trần Kim Tuyên, Ngô Trọng Hiếu,<sup>103</sup> the various ministers who headed the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants, and other high-ranking officials were all members of the CLP. The CLP, ultimately, managed those who would be the shakers and movers of the South.

Alongside its control over the leadership of important non-governmental organs, the Party also formed an intelligence network that manages the conduct, politics, and loyalties of virtually all political, military, and social organs. CLP members would infiltrate these organs and would serve as reporting devices through which tabs could be kept on individuals and ensure the operations of each organ were aligned with the political-ideological aims of the CLP.<sup>104</sup> Its public face—the National Revolutionary Movement—also kept tabs on members, suspected communists and criminals, and kept regular reports of anticommunist and monitoring activities across the nation.<sup>105</sup>

With an incredibly monitored information apparatus and a refined intelligence network surrounding the operations of the PSP, study materials under the First Republic could be drawn from a variety of sources and yet is still maintained within the regime's ideological boundaries. Indeed, study session organizers often drew upon sources outside of what was directly sent to them from the central directing body. For the most part, the central directing body only sent the primary materials for readings. These were lengthy and complex pieces that sought to convey the ideological platform of the regime through the usage of political theory and abstractions. To

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<sup>102</sup> Three newly appointed top officials after the October 1960 shake up of the regime: Ngô Trọng Hiếu—Director of the Civic Commissariat, Bùi Văn Lương—the Minister of the Interior, Nguyễn Đình Thuần—Presidential Aide for National Security, and his long-time friend Dr. Trần Kim Tuyên—Chief of Intelligence. Ngô Trọng Hiếu and Trần Kim Tuyên also aided the formation of the early theoretical model of the Chiêu Hồi program.

<sup>103</sup> Czar of the Civic Commissariat beginning in 1961.

<sup>104</sup> Phạm, Thúc Sơn, “Những Trụ Cột Chính Trị-Xã Hội của Chính Quyền Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa ở Miền Nam Việt Nam (1954-1963)” *Tạp Chí Đại Học Thủ Dầu Một*, 3(22): 2015, 45-52.

<sup>105</sup> See various report in Folder No. 29257, PTTVNCH, *Về tổ chức và hoạt động của phong trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia, Phong Trào Phụng Sự tiến hóa xã hội VN năm 1954-1963*.

effectively convey the ideological content, session organizers and presenters often had to corroborate the primary material with additional sources.

In the November 1955 CDTC National Conference, “supplemental materials” for study sessions were classified as “poetry, newspapers, stories, film, and pictures” to be utilized in conjunction with the primary document.<sup>106</sup> In 1956, with the expansion of the CDTC to the broader population, the Central Directive requested that individual organs contact publishing houses for political study materials to be printed in a subsection of newspapers. This would ensure that individuals would have ready access to these readings prior to political study sessions.<sup>107</sup> Certain administrative organs even published their own newsletter.<sup>108</sup> Political study organizers drew on journals published by non-governmental organizations like *Chiến Sĩ* by the NRM,<sup>109</sup> *Gió Nam* (Southern Winds) by the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants,<sup>110</sup> and *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa* (Warriors of the Republic)—a key ideological forum for the South Vietnamese military.<sup>111</sup> Ordinary newspapers like *Saigon Mới*—self-described as an “organ for information and discussion”—were also utilized as a “supplemental” source.

Textual forums published by non-governmental organs were largely kept within the ideological boundaries of the Diệm regime. The journals published by the NRM and the Union were replete with pieces that explored Personalist philosophy, contributed justifications for the regime’s anticommunist position, detailed and commented on new and existing state policies, and these journals—ideological training forums—were carefully designed to mold their readers into effective cadres of the Republic’s various state projects. Annual addresses by Ngô Đình Diệm and speeches by high-ranking officials of the regime were often published in full. Each journal also reported on the monthly activities of its organization, contributions the organization

<sup>106</sup> “Học Tập Chính Trị (Tài liệu thuyết trình trước Đại Hội Tổ Cộng Tòa Quốc ngày 12.11.1955.” Folder No. 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>107</sup> “Kế Hoạch Tác Động Đợt 3 Của Giai Đoạn 1 Phát Động Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trong Toàn Quốc.” Folder No. 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>108</sup> *Dân Việt* by General Office of Migration, for example, relayed the fundamentals of the CDTC focusing on “the [communist’s] scheme to divide the people, disrupt our migration process, General Referendum, and National Assembly Elections.” “Báo Cáo Tổng Kết Hoạt Động Tổ Cộng Của Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Trong 1 năm qua.” Folder No. 55, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 4: Tổng Kết Kế Hoạch động giai đoạn 1 và đệ nhất chu niên chiến dịch năm 1956*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>109</sup> The journal came out in November of 1954 explicitly designed to “propagandize, train, and inform” their cadres in accordance to “the spirit of morals, the spirit of the nation, the spirit of struggle, and the spirit of responsibility.” Marked with Personalist philosophy, the journal emphasized the transformation of thoughts and ideals towards a revolutionary self, ready to engage in a national revolution. In 1962 when Ngô Đình Nhu rolled out the Strategic Hamlet, *Chiến Sĩ* provided ideological and training documents for cadres and followed the progress of the program.

<sup>110</sup> The journal describe itself as an organ for “cultural and philosophy, enabling discussion about many important and contemporary topics.” Classified as one of the organization’s ideological training initiatives, the journal seeks to “forward the study movement...amongst civil servants,” to help “fellow members absorb the various issue of our times,” and “clearly understand the methods of study to cultivate their minds, morals, and occupation.”

<sup>111</sup> Like other ideological outlets of the time, the journal often published Diem’s annual addresses as well as speeches by high-ranking officials of the regime. In 1962, *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa* restructured its contents to incorporate a section on “study” which includes international news, military theories, developments in the Strategic Hamlet project, and political discussion.

was making in pertinent arenas of politics, and often came with a section on international news and recent events within the nation.<sup>112</sup>

Newspapers were often drawn upon as supplemental study materials. For the most part, periodicals were monitored, making them ideologically “safe” for indoctrination purposes. These newspapers often reported on general activities of multiple ministries, published speeches by Republican leaders, espoused anticommunist and anti-neutralist sentiments, provided policies and procedures for the various elections, and reported on activities of major state projects like that of the CDTC, the Strategic Hamlet, and Rural Development. Beginning in 1959, *Saigon Mới* even had a regular section detailing the imprisonment and execution of communist agents after Law 10/59 was passed.

Due to the fact that the various governmental and non-governmental bodies of the South were organizationally linked by “interlocking directorates,” forums like *Chiến Sĩ*, *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*, and *Gió Nam* dispensed similar ideological content though modified to the specific operational and literary interest of each group. Indeed, the monitoring of ideological messages were not restricted to these organizations—which were tightly controlled through the shadowy operations of the CLP. Control over content extended to public newspapers and forums as well. Although the specific extent to which the regime controlled periodical contents during the First Republic is unclear,<sup>113</sup> after the First Republic fell in 1963, an outpouring of criticism and anger against the regime’s draconian informational policies came out into the open. There were justifications for such collective rage. In June of 1963, for example, the highly respected political-economic journal *Bách Khoa* was forced to pull a piece comparing contemporary political systems from its 155<sup>th</sup> issue because it effectively categorized the First Republic as an authoritarian regime comparable to Nasser’s Egypt or Franco in Spain. Indeed, the new military leadership that rose after November of 1963 premised itself on the promise of the freedom of speech and lax control over the journalistic discourse.

While the monitoring apparatus carried out by the CLP was dismantled following the collapse of the First Republic, this liberalization was quickly met with renewed efforts by various Interregnum regimes to control public discourse. Under the administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, a set of “Golden Rules” was instituted for “good journalist behaviors.” These were as follows: “Do not promote Communism or neutralism; Do not endanger national security or the army’s morale; Do not spread false news of any kind; Do not slander individuals; Do not bolster vices.”<sup>114</sup> Following the instituting of these “Rules,” a number of newspapers were shut down for

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<sup>112</sup> These organization-based journals also contained articles relating to specific interests. *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*, for example, contained military reports on battles and operations, military theories, and military history. *Gió Nam*, catered to the civil servants and intelligentsia, published pieces on Confucianism, culture, pedagogy and education, and philosophical ruminations on methods of political study.

<sup>113</sup> Control accomplished largely through the Ministry of Information—and the Directorate of Information in the Office of the President which replaced it in 1960.

<sup>114</sup> “Golden Rules in Saigon,” *Times* Jan. 24 1964. Concern for these matters were not exclusively that of the State. Indeed, many of these problems of the press had been raised by in early January by Phạm Lương Giang in *Bách Khoa*. In that piece, the author called for a responsibility amongst the press and attribute much of literary excess to the liberatory spirit engendered in the Revolution. Phạm Lương Giang, “Tự Do Ngôn Luận và Báo Chí,” *Bách Khoa*, 168(Jan 1964), 21-28.

numerous reasons including their association with the former regime, alleged communist sympathies, and spread of divisive or content politically attacking individuals.<sup>115</sup>

Under Nguyễn Khánh, a second set of censorship laws were enacted, initially closing 13 newspapers for ties to the “old” regime.<sup>116</sup> The Khánh administration also regularly deployed “information cadres” to confiscate specific daily issues of newspapers that, as deemed by the Information Ministry, carried “fallacious news,” had sold before an officially predesignated time, or published contents that jeopardized the war effort. Following the Gulf of Tonkin attack and American aerial bombardment of the North in retaliation, Nguyễn Khánh declared a “State of Emergency,” imposing greater restrictions on the press.<sup>117</sup> Large blocks of whiteness appeared in what was supposed to be newspaper columns began appearing in major outlets like *Chính Luận* and *Tự Do*—an indication of state censorship. These measures of newspaper closure continued under subsequent civilian administrations, and later expanded into a policy of coopting the South Vietnamese press into the work of propaganda and psychological war. Indeed, under the administration of Phan Huy Quát the Psychological Warfare Ministry operated with the belief that “information during war” must “propagandize, mobilize the populace to directly fight.” And not only the populace, it must also target enemies as well as allies so that they too could fully “comprehend the direction and policies of the Nation.”<sup>118</sup>

When the Directorate took power in June, various policies reversed any achievements in press freedom as the Kỳ administration sought to place South Vietnam on a war footing. In July, a number of newspapers were closed down leaving only 23 dailies remaining. Censorship was increased and “government communiqués” were encouraged rather than independently written articles. Press restrictions were seemingly only relaxed following the Struggle Movement in 1966 and the Constituent Assembly elections. Newspaper coverage leading up to the elections of 1967 were allowed to carry the political platforms of diverse Presidential and National Assembly candidates—many of whom were openly critical of military rule and supported some manner of dialogue with the communist North to achieve resolution to the war.

Indeed, the Second Republican Constitution was far more notably progressive than the various Interregnum charters that preceded it. Articles Seven to Thirteen established citizen’s rights to “freedom of beliefs, freedom of discussion, press, publication,” and assembly, as well as promised support for cultural production, free education, and journalism. Most important,

<sup>115</sup> 5 closed indefinitely: *Saigon* (relations to old regime; opposed the government and, by doing so, aided the communists); *Điện Báo* (relations to old regime); *Dân Tộc* (charged with “advocating for neutralist peace, class warfare of the communists”); *Đi và Sống* (praise of the guerrillas, lacked constructive criticism, and encouraged extremism); *Sống* (condemnation of national leadership, called for class warfare). “Đóng cửa 9 nhật báo,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 17, 1964.

<sup>116</sup> “Đóng cửa 13 tờ báo,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 21, 1964.

<sup>117</sup> “Nguyên Văn Đạo Sắc Luật Công Bố Tình Trạng Khẩn Trương Trên Toàn Thê Lãnh Thổ VN,” and “Thủ Tướng Nguyễn xKhansh ký sắc luật tuyên bố tình trạng khẩn trương,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 10, 1964.

<sup>118</sup> While the mobilization of the countryside and propaganda broadcasted into North Vietnam and communist held territories were not particularly new, the idea of propagating to “foreign countries” essentially was. According to the Minister of Psychological Warfare, this meant ensuring that “our allies understand, sympathize and help us” in the anticommunist war as well as gaining the support of “Vietnamese expatriates” living abroad. The battle for “hearts and minds” was not solely one fought in Vietnam, it was to be also fought in these overseas Vietnamese communities. Indeed, “hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese citizens currently live abroad, and everyday thirst for news of their homeland.” The communists are pushing their agenda abroad with the help of the international communism, and thus South Vietnam must do the same (“Diễn Văn của Thủ Tướng và Tổng Trưởng Thông Tin Tâm Lý Chiến,” *Chính Luận*, April 22, 1965).

however, was the explicit prohibition of a “censorship regime,” and the legalization of “peaceful and legal [political] opposition” to the state. This liberalization of public discourse, however, was short lived. Following the communist offensive in January 1968—just three months after the formation of the Second Republic—the new Thiệu Presidency immediately took measures that reversed these progressive trends. Capitalizing on nationalist and anticommunist solidarity which peaked following the Tết Offensive, the Thiệu intensified press censorship and political control over the Republican society.

While censorship was explicitly prohibited in the Second Republican Constitution, blocks of whiteness began reappearing on Vietnamese newspapers in early February 1968.<sup>119</sup> At the opposition of journalists and the National Assembly, the Thiệu administration was forced to lift censors in May, although newspapers continued to face legal retribution for publishing communist or neutralist contents.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, despite the regime’s promise to relax its censors, the Thiệu administration nevertheless took steps to threaten and suspend critical newspapers, as well as arrest and imprison antiwar activists and political dissenters. By February of 1969, sheet music and records of Trịnh Công Sơn’s antiwar songs were banned from stores and airwaves,<sup>121</sup> and, at the close of 1969, the *New York Times* counted some 39 daily newspapers had “been suspended for specific periods or closed down altogether” under the Thiệu Presidency.<sup>122</sup> As the Second Republic grew on, press policies only tightened. Indeed, Thiệu’s victory in the 1971 Presidential election paved the way for the regime to implement more hardline measures against political dissent.

### *Coercion*

The progressively tightening of social control by the Thiệu administration following the Tết Offensive paralleled new emphasis on standardizing state messaging and “unifying the [national] will” in hopes of building a political environment conducive to effective implementation of state policy.<sup>123</sup> Indeed, through the General Information Program, state administrators, civil servants, and soldiers underwent compulsory training aimed at converting the everyday bureaucrat into an “information cadre.” For the orchestrators of the General Information Program, the issue at hand was regular, effective, and systematic state messaging through political study and proper training of cadres. This concurrency of social control and state

<sup>119</sup> “Censorship Back in Saigon,” *New York Times*, Feb. 14, 1968.

<sup>120</sup> “Saigon Censorship Deplored,” *New York Times*, Mar. 17, 1968; “S. Viet House Votes Against Censorship,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 24, 1968; “Saigon Censorship Battle Grows, and Newspaper Gaps Abound,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1968; “Saigon Lifts Censorship, In Effect Nearly 4 Months,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1968. Reversal of censorship appears to also be a result of efforts by the new Information Minister—Tôn Tất Thiện—who took a liberal approach to information policies. According to the *New York Times*, Thiện—a former journalist for the *Guardian* newspaper in Vietnam—encouraged the press revelations of corruption within government and discussion of “peace” and “de-escalation”—terminologies Republican regimes had often associated to neutralist advocates and communist sympathizers (“Papers in Saigon are Intact Again,” *New York Times*, June 2, 1968; “S. Vietnam Spokesman Critical, Loyal Voice,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 22, 1968).

<sup>121</sup> “Anti-War Ballads Banned by Saigon,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 12, 1969.

<sup>122</sup> “2 Saigon Papers Closed; 15 Students Leaders Seized,” *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 1969.

<sup>123</sup> CV 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/15/1968, PTTVNCH 29916: *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*. As Thiệu argued in his speech to the National Assembly, “This most urgent issue of the Nation issued to the Information branch an incredibly difficult matter that is in some way make the entirety of the people, the army thoroughly understand the thought contents to make consistent their standpoint, unify their will, determinately support the Government in all matters of policy.”

messaging was characteristic of politics during the Republican era. Far from unique, the Thiệu administration continued patterns of governance which blended, on the one hand, forms of social control such as civilian monitoring, restrictions on civil liberties, press censorship on grounds of national security. On the other hand, the administration enacted mass mobilization efforts and extensive state messaging to rile up anticommunist sentiments and support for the regime in power.

Like the First Republic, efforts to excise any and all forms of communist influence in South Vietnam continued under subsequent regimes. Law 093-SL/CT, in particular, passed under the Khánh administration placed “individuals, parties, organizations, congregations, and activities under any form to actualize, directly or indirectly, the ideology of communism or communist sympathizing neutralism” outside the realm of legality.<sup>124</sup> During the “State of Emergency” initiated following the Gulf of Tonkin attacks, these measures were intensified. Under the Quát administration, measures taken to expressively censor the press of content that could be read as sympathetic to communists or neutralists, and the Ministry of Psychological Warfare vowed to deal harshly with violations.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, amidst a spurt of “peace organizations” in February 1965, the Quát administration placed peace movements with known or suspected affiliations with communists outside the realm of legality.<sup>126</sup> New measures were taken to “deport” those captured to the North, climaxing with the arrest and disbandment of two organizations and the deportation of three leaders of such organizations in mid-March above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel.<sup>127</sup> Harsh measures against communists and their alleged sympathizers continued into Directorate rule. Articulated clearly in the 1965 Charter, the primary duty of the military regime was “the retreat and extermination of the communist infiltrators.”<sup>128</sup> As a symbol of the regime’s prioritization of the anticommunist war, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ set up a firing squad posts and sandbags in the city center, next to Bến Thành Market, to publicly execute those who were deemed communists, speculators, and war profiteers.<sup>129</sup> Under the Second Republic, the infamous joint-CIA’s “Phoenix Program” was initiated which targeted the civilian infrastructure of communist guerrillas, resulting in the surveillance, arrests, detention, torture, and assassination suspected communists and sympathizers. Indeed, indicative of anticommunist imperatives that marked the Republican era, propaganda and activities in support of communism were constitutional violations in both the First Republic and the Second.

<sup>124</sup> “Lần Đầu Tiên, Chính Phủ Chống Cộng miền Nam VN,” *Tự Do*, Feb 18, 1964

<sup>125</sup> “Thiếu Tướng Tổng Trưởng Tâm Lý Chiến hợp báo,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 6, 1965.

<sup>126</sup> “Phù hợp với ý chí quyết thắng đang lên cao, Chính Phủ quyết định đặt ra ngoài vòng pháp luật mọi phong trào chủ bại mệnh danh là Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 31, 1965; all except one led by the Buddhist Reverend Thích Quảng Liên

<sup>127</sup> Originally, the three men—Tôn Thất Dương Ky, Dr. Phạm Văn Huyền, and journalist Cao Minh Chiêm—were to be “parachuted” off into North Vietnam (“Độc Báo: Thả Dù 3 ông Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 17, 1965, org. cited in *Sống và Tiêng Vang*). However, the three “communist sympathizing peace activists” were simply deported across the Hiền Lương Bridge which divided Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel (Giữa tiếng la 6 nguyên rủa của đồng bào 3 trí thức bệnh hoạn lâm lủi qua cầu Bến Hải,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 22, 1965). Their departure from North Vietnam to France, see: “Các Lực Lượng Chống Cộng Bảo Động Việt Cộng Đã Suất cảng 3 ‘ông’ Hòa Bình qua Pháp,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 14, 1965.

<sup>128</sup> “Ước Pháp ngày 19-6-65 của Việt Nam CH,” *Chính Luận*, June 22, 1965.

<sup>129</sup> “Saigon Sets Up Firing Squad Posts in Crackdown,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 17, 1965; “Saigon Orders Profiteers And Terrorists Executed,” *New York Times*, Jun 17, 1965; “Viet Terrorist Executed by Firing Squad,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 22, 1965

Coercion coincided with efforts to systematically and regularly proselytize state messages. Never solely the responsibility of Political Study, Republican designs for ideological work entailed a multiplicity of strategies through which a political environment that would be receptive to state messages can be constructed. Indeed, the Communist Denunciation Campaign entailed not only regular political study, but also state-orchestrated cultural production, mass procession, and airing of anticommunist grievances to normalize the public denunciation of communism. These efforts paralleled measures to restrict press freedom, monitor political dissent, as well as to arrest, imprison, and execute alleged French and communist sympathizers. After the First Republic, the Khánh administration utilized political study in tandem with press advertisement, emotionally-laden public speeches, state funded exhibitions, and mass rallies during the 1964 Day of National Resentment to galvanize anticommunist sentiments, mobilize support for a “Northward March,” and establish legitimacy for the new regime. Under Directorate rule, the “Discussion Movement” was parcel to broader efforts to place South Vietnam on a war-footing, entailing price controls, austerity measures, intensification of censorship, and coercive threats against protests and demonstrations. Techniques for social control and the infrastructure for efficient and regular state messaging established the groundwork upon which the Kỳ administration justified restrictions to civil liberties, recrafted its image as the champion of democracy, defended against criticisms of military rule, demonized the Buddhist-led Struggle Movement, and mobilized support for the Thiệu-Kỳ ticket during the Presidential election of 1967.

Indicative of this holistic approach to ideological dissemination was the efforts by the Thiệu administration to construct a robust informational infrastructure following the Tết Offensive. Recall that the “General Information Program” formalized in 1970 was the end result of a period of PSP restructuring beginning in February 1969.<sup>130</sup> While political study was a primary emphasis in the “General Information Program,” the effort to disseminate the Thiệu administration’s message on the question of peace and negotiations entailed government-wide collaboration of various ministries. While the Information Ministry would be responsible for political study, the Interior Ministry would be responsible for surveillance, inspection, and “cleansing” of societal organizations while also directing collaborative efforts with Civil Defense Groups. The Education Ministry was to work with youth and student groups and work tactically with these groups to properly “lead” them. The General Directorate of Political Warfare was to work closely with the Information Ministry to conduct regular study sessions. A bi-weekly journal was to be published and independent news sources were to be “guided because in reality they have not significantly contributed to the collective struggle of the people.” Indicative of the

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<sup>130</sup> This restructuring process involved two key iterations (Campaign for Nationwide Political Study [May-Oct. 1969] and the Political Encouragement Program [Oct. 1969-Apr. 1970]), spanned across two Premierships (Trần Văn Hương to Trần Thiện Khiêm), and was in response to Thiệu’s speech to the National Assembly in April 1968 which emphasized the need for “spiritual and political encouragement” in the face of inevitable American departure and negotiations with the communist enemy (CV 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/15/1968 and attachment: “Bản Hướng Dẫn Khai Thác: Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước phiên họp khoáng đại lưỡng Viện Quốc Hội ngày 10-4-1968,” PTTVNCH 29916, *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*).

totalistic vision of the Program, these efforts were intended to “mobilize *all* forces for the extermination of communism and the protection of the homeland” (emphasis mine).<sup>131</sup>

The infrastructure established through the General Information Program was deployed in several campaigns. Most notably was the “Campaign to Support the Front” *Chiến Dịch Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến* initiated after the Easter Offensive in 1972. The stated objective of the campaign was to demonstrate gratitude and support for soldiers at the front in hopes that these soldiers would “maintain their spirit and more heroically fight.” While political study was organized for members of the administration, the campaign also sought to utilize the press, television, journalists, authors, and other cultural producers to rally a call for volunteers in military service. Cultural producers were instructed to develop “innovations to feature military victory.” Planned were films about heroic actions at the front, a mobile exhibition displaying images of soldiers, letters and gifts to soldiers delivered by student and youth organizations, and portraits of martyrs to be displayed in public spaces. In collaboration with Open Arms operations, rallies were to be called upon to “present at the major schools in the Capitol.”<sup>132</sup>

The planned program to “support the front” was jointly implemented with the declaration of martial law. Proselytized in PSP study materials as a necessary measure in the face of intensified warfare and communist aggression,<sup>133</sup> the decree in May entailed draconian restrictions on the press and political activities, increased monitoring and surveillance by Civil Defense forces in rural sectors, inspection of private homes and lodging by military forces, detention of those “deemed dangerous for national security,” a ban on all demonstrations and protests, confiscation of weapons within the civilian population, and restrictions of civilian movement and transportation. Resurrecting the “State of Emergency” declared by Nguyễn Khánh in August of 1964, those found in violation of the decree would be tried by the military court without legal due process,<sup>134</sup> subjected to harsh penalties, and the state would freely requisition of “human and material resources to satisfy the urgent needs...of the Nation.” Reserves were called to aid in pacification efforts, colleges and schools were closed down, and night clubs and other sites of entertainment were suspended indefinitely.<sup>135</sup> Aspects of the martial law decreed in 1972 would endure for the remainder of the Republic.<sup>136</sup> Even after the

<sup>131</sup> Quotation from “Biên bản phiên họp ủy ban điều hợp Tâm Lý Chiến Trung Ương Ngày 27-2-1969 tại Bộ Thông Tin” attached to 1490/BTT.UBĐHTLC/TƯ dated 3/3/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*. See also, CV 868/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/CT dated 3/18/196, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>132</sup> “Chiến Dịch Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến” dated 5/5/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài Liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình, và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

<sup>133</sup> “Hiện Tình Đất Nước Trước Cuộc Xâm Lăng Trắng Trợn của Cộng Sản Bắc Việt,” attached to CV 1611/BTT/UBTTĐC/TƯ dated 5/29/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài Liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình, và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

<sup>134</sup> This was a guarantee in Articles 7 and 8 of the Second Republican Constitution.

<sup>135</sup> “Thông Cáo của Phủ Thủ Tướng đề ngày 11-5-1972,” attached to CV 1728-P.Th.T/SCV dated 5/11/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài Liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình, và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

<sup>136</sup> In mid-1973, Thieu declared the perpetuity of martial law, arguing that press restrictions and suspension of legal safeguards would remain in effect until “a real ceasefire” was implemented (“Saigon holds out for early elections,” *The Guardian*, June 15, 1973). At the dawn of Republican collapse in late 1974, South Vietnam continued to be under martial law and the military court held preeminence in the Republican judicial system (Saigon’s Military



Paris Peace Accords had been signed, martial law continued, positioning the military “as police force, court system, propaganda agent and civil administrator” in South Vietnam.<sup>137</sup>

As the Paris negotiations neared its conclusion, the Thiệu administration deployed similar strategies to prevent defection, combat the enemy’s propaganda, and guard against the possibility that communist guerrillas would exploit the inevitable ceasefire to make political and military gains. A specialized study material directed to pacification units in November highlight the extensiveness of the preparations to be undertaken prior to the implementation of ceasefire. Alongside stockpiling weapons, ammunitions, medicine supply, setting mine traps, and building barricades in rural hamlets, emphasis was placed on the surveillance of suspicious civil components including Open Arms ralliers, suspected sympathizers, and those with family members who had joined the guerrillas. A widespread intelligence network was to be created, involving drop boxes, weekly reports, and the participation of not only soldiers and information cadres, but also civilians.<sup>138</sup>

In terms of state messaging, political study and mass mobilization was emphasized. Regurgitating familiar aims of “preventing chaos within the citizenry” and “nourishing the anticommunist spirit,” study materials, slogans, and propaganda was to allay fears of American “abandonment” and inevitable victory against the communists. Information cadres were to implement a campaign of letter writing to the President, through which cadres could “inspect the thoughts, standpoint of civilians through what is written in the letters.” Public denunciation of communism was encouraged, “the purpose...to entice the hatred of the people towards communism while simultaneously calling upon the people to join hands with the Government and cadres to exterminate communist sleeper agents.” In conjunction with regular and compulsory study sessions, images of communist atrocities were to be publicly displayed, families whose members had been victims of communist atrocities were to erect shrines in commemoration of those killed, and, every month, family members or cadres were to publicly denounce these crimes.<sup>139</sup>

Although it is still an open question of whether the full extent of this draconian anticommunist campaign actually manifested in the lead up to the ceasefire,<sup>140</sup> the military was placed on high alert in January 1973, intensifying security measures in anticipation of a communist offensive. In accordance to martial law, the civilian population endured random inspection of vehicles and homes, Thiệu authorized “shoot[ing] on the spot people who incite riots and ‘applaud the Communists,’” and declared anyone engaging in activity or public display of communist or neutralist support were to be summarily arrested. Resistance to state activities could also face immediate execution.<sup>141</sup> During the period, the Republican administration further

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Courts Dominate Judicial System,” *New York Times*, Aug. 19, 1974). In January 1975, Phước Bình Province became the first province to fall to communist forces, culminating in the Fall of Saigon in April.

<sup>137</sup> “Thieu refuses to soften stand against Viet Cong,” *Boston Globe*, Feb. 18, 1973.

<sup>138</sup> “Nhiệm Vụ và Công Tác Của CB/PTNT khi có ngưng bắn,” attached to CV 029/PTNT/5/SVVT/M dated 11/4/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài Liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình, và ngừng bắn năm 1972.*

<sup>139</sup> “Nhiệm Vụ và Công Tác Của CB/PTNT khi có ngưng bắn,” attached to CV 029/PTNT/5/SVVT/M dated 11/4/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài Liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình, và ngừng bắn năm 1972.*

<sup>140</sup> “Saigon Reign of Terror Doubted: No Signs Found of Plans for Killings or Mass Arrests,” *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1972.

<sup>141</sup> “Saigon Puts All Troops on Full Alert To Counter Expected Drive by Enemy,” *New York Times*, Jan. 23, 1973.

intensified its anticommunist propaganda, and Thiệu cracked down on political opponents, consolidating national support within his own “Democracy Party” —or, as the *Washington Post* puts it, “at least the acquiescence of civil servants, provincial officials, and other government employees.”<sup>142</sup>

### *Civic Education*

Perhaps most glaringly indicative of the holistic character of the Republican state’s 1972 campaign in the lead up to the Paris Peace Accords is the extent of its vision for mobilization. Ideological control over the population to ward against communist influence required not merely the participation of civilians, but also children as well. As dictated in the planning document, local Rural Reconstruction cadres were to “train rural youths regarding collection methods and delivery of news and intelligence.”<sup>143</sup> While the enlistment of “rural children” *thiếu nhi nông thôn* in counter-insurgent and intelligence efforts was never a regular policy of the Republican state, this case highlights the extreme manifestation of patterns of ideological education and pedagogical intent evident since the First Republic.

In tandem with perpetual anticommunist censorship and press control across the Republican Era, the South Vietnamese state employed public education as a site for the cultivation of nationalist citizens. Like many other postcolonial societies undergoing transformation amidst the Cold War,<sup>144</sup> South Vietnamese education targeted the inculcation of new norms, knowledge, morals, and values that catered not only to proper behaviors and responsibilities of being a citizen, but also expectations that students would eventually contribute to the economic and political ambitions of the Republic.

Since the days under Ngô Đình Diệm, educational philosophy in South Vietnam targeted three fundamentals: 1) *nhân bản*—the uncontestable and inherent value of individual (or person), 2) *dân tộc*—the tradition, history, and culture of the Vietnamese people, and 3) *khai phóng*—the importance of liberal progress defined by scientific advancement, democracy, and practical application. On the one hand, this philosophy blended Rousseauian ideals regarding the holistic

<sup>142</sup> “Thieu steps up anti-Communist propaganda,” *The Irish Times*, Jan. 27, 1973; “Thieu Runs ‘Garrison State,’” *The Washington Post*, Feb. 18, 1973; “Thieu Emerges From Negotiations Stronger Than Ever,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 25, 1973.

<sup>143</sup> Quote: “huấn luyện thiếu nhi nông thôn về cách thức thu tập và chuyển hành các tin tức tình báo” in “Nhiệm Vụ và Công Tác Của CB/PTNT khi có ngưng bắn,” attached to CV 029/PTNT/5/SVVT/M dated 11/4/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài Liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Hậu Phương Yểm Trợ Tiền Tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình, và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

<sup>144</sup> As scholars of revolution have long argued, civic and moral education are mobilized to transform not only the cultural-political milieu into normative standards adapted to the new demands of a revolutionary society, but revolutionary states also sought to shape morals and behavior at an individual level. In a study of “revolutionary societies,” Ruscoe demonstrates the necessity of institutionalizing “new moral behavior” amongst a mass population in pursuit of state agendas for economic development and redistribution. For Ruscoe, whether in China, Cuba or Tanzania, new “revolutionary” ethics were required for the construction of the new man and the making of a new society. Through state-directed education, “the new student, who will become the new man, is expected to have made a moral commitment to the revolution and its imperatives” (Gordon C. Ruscoe, “Moral Education in Revolutionary Society,” *Theory into Practice*, 14(4): 1975, 258-263). Similarly, in Nicaragua under the Sandanista regime, education was utilized in forming a “more critically conscious and participatory citizen motivated by collective goals” while also “transmi[tt]ing skills and knowledge necessary to overcome decades of underdevelopment” (Robert F. Arnove and Anthony Dewees, “Education and Revolutionary Transformation in Nicaragua, 1979-1990,” *Comparative Education Review*, 35(1):1991, 92-109)

development of a child's physical, emotional, and mental faculties for life-long learning with the political aims of crafting voluntarist and patriotic citizens willing to contribute to the affairs of the nation. On the other hand, this philosophy was applied to a broader Republican belief that Vietnam—as a former colony and historically ridden by war—was economically, politically, and socially “backward” *chậm tiến*, and in desperate need of radical reforms to rectify this deplorable state of affairs. Thus, while Republican education emphasized practical application such as technological training, career development, and scientific rationality for the political and economic betterment of South Vietnam, it also sought to cultivate “free individuals” who would have moralistic respect for others, their society, their nation, and themselves.<sup>145</sup> Public schools, in this respect, served as vehicles through which the Republican citizen was made.

Far from a novelty, Civic Education of the Republic finds its origins, at least, since the final years of French colonialism. Enacted as “d’education civique” under the Provisional Government of Vietnam amidst the brewing First Indochina War, the goals of the course were to provide Vietnamese citizens with an understanding of rights and duties, to “warn” Vietnamese citizens of foreign subversive doctrines and the ramifications adhering to such doctrines, and to indoctrinate the Vietnamese citizenry of practical morality and the benefits of Franco-Vietnamese mutual understanding. From its inception, the course was designed to combat “opposing propaganda that is to say communist” and sought to unify the political message of the state and organize its dissemination.<sup>146</sup> The course was to be uniquely tailored to Vietnam and attempted to instill a sense of Vietnamese nationhood in the context of Franco-Vietnamese alliance and was designed to train a cohort of cadres upon which the course would be expanded into a national program. This cohort of cadres were expected to “return home and teach their colleagues what they have learned themselves.”<sup>147</sup>

Under the First Republic, the Diem Administration implemented a new educational curriculum designed to promote South Vietnamese nationalism. Personalist ideological tenets were incorporated emphasizing humanism, rights and duties of citizenry, human freedom, and the need of national reconstruction. Under Diệm, allotted hours to study of civics were increased and by 1959 was made an examination subject, thus becoming a core element of the public education curriculum. This new curriculum targeted the “infiltration” of communist propaganda, sought to cultivate nationalist sentiments, develop loyalty to the Diệm and his government, and “undo” the cultural deterioration of Vietnam and “revive” its cultural institutions. Concepts of Patriotism, discipline, and observances of laws were incorporated into 4<sup>th</sup> grade civic education courses, and students were taught of the “beauty” and potentials of Vietnam in order to “rekindle” their patriotism. Students were taught to have “love for justice and freedom...love for...the National Colors, the National Anthem, and toward the President.”<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Trần Văn Chánh, “Giáo Dục Miền Nam Việt Nam (1954-1975) Trên Con Đường Xây Dựng và Phát Triển,” *Tạp Chí Nghiên Cứu và Phát Triển*, 7-8:2014, 4-52. In 1964, “liberal progress” khai phóng was revised to “science” *khoa học*, similarly emphasizing the importance of scientific modernism and liberal democracy.

<sup>146</sup> CV No 644-BTT dated 8/17/1948, Phủ Thủ Hiến Nam Việt (1945-1954) R23-78, *Hồ Sơ về lớp công dân giáo dục tại Bắc Việt Nam 1948*.

<sup>147</sup> CV No 644-BTT dated 8/17/1948, PTHNV R23-78, *Hồ Sơ về lớp công dân giáo dục tại Bắc Việt Nam 1948*.

<sup>148</sup> Matthew Masur, “Hearts and Minds: Cultural Nation-Building in South Vietnam, 1954-1963,” diss., *Ohio State University* (2004), 56-60; see also Nguyễn Thanh Liêm et al, *Giáo Dục ở Miền Nam Tự Do Trước 1975*, (Lê Văn Duyệt Foundation: 2006).

These pedagogical aims highlight the role of Civic Education in the creation of an anticommunist political culture. Although Civic Education was a course taught in public school, its envisioned purpose went far beyond the classroom. More than solely a concern of the Education Ministry, it was an issue reflective of the larger ideological work of the Republic. Civic Education was viewed on a much broader level and, like the vision laid out for the CDTC, the contents of Civic Education would “deeply” penetrate into the psyche of the Republican citizenry. Matters relating to elections, duties and rights of citizens, the relationships South Vietnam had with the Free World, its political and economic structures, and the differentiation between the Republic and communist or totalitarian states were deployed not only academically, but also politically. Although Civic Education was ostensibly the domain of the Education Ministry, its historical origins and development existed in tandem with the indoctrination and propagandistic activities directed by its Information and other ministerial counterparts. Civic Education was to serve the national ideological agenda, often subservient to anticommunist campaigns and the changing political imperatives of the Republic state.

This relationship between education and national ideology came early in Republican history. Even prior to the creation of the First Republic, the Minister of Reform of the then State of Vietnam—Nguyễn Đức Thuận—had pushed for revamping the Civic Education program established under the French. In December of 1954, the Minister of Reform sent a plea to Diệm requesting permission to initiate holistic reformation of the Civic Education program. Going beyond merely public schools, the Minister of Reform envisioned that Civic Education “classes must be opened up in all places, books need to be produced, instructors had to be trained” and that such an expanded and reformed Civic Education is a necessity for the good of the general population.<sup>149</sup> In a follow up message, the Minister argued that Civic Education was to target “moral life (*vie morale*) and social life,” defined as the politic and the economic (“*vie sociale double forme: politique et économique*”). For Thuận, the importance of such a program was evidently situated within the “contemporary struggle...combating Communism and the[ir] schemes of infiltration.” Civic Education was to be a “weapon” *vũ khí*, ensuring that the masses become “clearly aware of the political condition of the nation as well as each individual’s duty to determinatively protect their right to life freely and that of their family.”<sup>150</sup>

The Minister of Reform presented a systematic program of action to reform and expand civic education to the broader public. The aim of such expansion and reform was to unify the various components of society, to provide them with a common goal, and cultivate Vietnamese nationalism.<sup>151</sup> At the request of the Minister of Reform, a “Week of Civic Education” was to be initiated in December of 1955. No evidence suggests that this “Week” actually took place. Nevertheless, planning for the “Week” mobilized the participation of various governmental

<sup>149</sup> CV 242/BCC/KT3 dated 12/21/1954, PTTVNCH 29188, *Tài Liệu Của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Bộ Cải Cách v/v phát triển môn "Công Dân Giáo Dục" năm 1954-1955.*

<sup>150</sup> CV 11/BCC/KT dated 1/5/1955, PTTVNCH 29188, *Tài Liệu Của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Bộ Cải Cách v/v phát triển môn "Công Dân Giáo Dục" năm 1954-1955.*

<sup>151</sup> “Vấn Đề Công Dân Giáo Dục,” attached to CV 242/BCC/KT3 dated 12/21/1954, PTTVNCH 29188, *Tài Liệu Của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Bộ Cải Cách v/v phát triển môn "Công Dân Giáo Dục" năm 1954-1955.*

Ministries.<sup>152</sup> Supported by the Prime Minister Office,<sup>153</sup> the Ministry of Education established a committee composed of representatives from the Ministry of Information, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Civic Commissariat, and the National Union of Revolutionary Civil Servants.<sup>154</sup> The available documents point to compliance amongst most of these administrative organs and a number of other entities in the planning and proposed enactment process.<sup>155</sup>

However, despite support and efforts by a host of ministerial bodies for the program, the Ministry of Information led by Trần Chánh Thành rejected the proposal to immediately enact the proposed week. For the Information Minister, enacting this ambitious program in December would be “more harmful to the government than beneficial,” arguing that “to propagate messages of civic liberties, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly when the Constitution and National Assembly is not yet established will allow the Viet Cong to abuse the opportunity, instigating the masses to demand too much of the Government and threaten public order.”<sup>156</sup> With this breakdown in consensus, the “Week” was delayed until “after the Constitution is ratified.” This stall in the process provided an avenue for the Information Ministry to seize the directive role. Building on the initiative already developed by the Education Ministry, the Ministry of Information appropriated the Civic Education designs, developed its own proposal, and, concurrent with political ascension of the CDT and political study during that period, pushed for a “Civic Education” that placed primary emphasis on the training of political cadres.

Differences between the Education Ministry’s proposal and that of the Information Ministry must be emphasized. The proposal by the Ministry of Education outlined a comprehensive agenda largely concurrent with the vision once urged by the Minister of Reform. Prioritizing the mobilization of the Republican society, the proposed program would include, first, the enactment of this “Week of National Civic Education” which would entail the hanging of slogans regarding responsibilities of citizens, incorporation of newspapers and mass media, embedding “discussion” articles in these outlets, public lectures by state cadres, and organized

<sup>152</sup> Response to Order cited in “Phúc Trình về “tuần lễ công dân giáo dục toàn quốc,”” dated 11/19/1955, TĐBCPNP 2744, *Về Ủy ban Tác Động Phong Trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc Năm 1956*.

<sup>153</sup> Diệm portrayed his support in CV 140/PTT/TPK dated 2/24/1955, PTTVNCH 29188, *Tài Liệu Của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Bộ Cải Cách v/v phát triển môn “Công Dân Giáo Dục” năm 1954-1955*. He writes: “I agree with you that: this course [Civic Education] must not only concern the psychological training of students, but must be popularized in the masses/Tôi đồng ý với Ông rằng: môn này không phải chỉ liên quan đến việc rèn luyện tâm trí các học sinh, mà còn cần được đem phổ biến trong dân chúng” and suggested that “Please contact the Ministers of National Education, Information, Youth to develop a practical program that can be easily actualized/Vậy xin ông liên lạc với các ông Tổng Trưởng Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục, Bộ Thông Tin, và Bộ Thanh Niên để vạch một chương trình cụ thể có thể thiết hiện được một cách dễ dàng.”

<sup>154</sup> “Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục lập ra một Ủy Ban phụ trách công việc ấy, gồm có đại diện Bộ Thông Tin, Tòa Đại Biếu, Nha Học Chánh, Công Dân Vụ, Liên Đoàn Công Chức cách mạng quốc gia; ông bổn Giám Đốc Học Vụ làm chủ tịch” (“Phúc Trình về “tuần lễ công dân giáo dục toàn quốc,”” 11/19/1955, TĐBCPNP 2744, *Về Ủy ban Tác Động Phong Trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc Năm 1956*).

<sup>155</sup> See Folder TĐBCPNP 2744, *Về Ủy ban Tác Động Phong Trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc Năm 1956*. Collaboration was planned with not only these administrative bodies, but also university students, radio and news forums, and propaganda departments in the Defense Ministry (Phúc Trình về “tuần lễ công dân giáo dục toàn quốc”). The initiative was also supported by the Governor of Saigon-Chợ Lớn who writes: “for me, to achieve the goal of transforming the national administration, training civil servants is not enough, but we must enact a program of civic education that allows the masses to understand their responsibilities and rights” (CV 1740-HC NV dated 6/25/1955, TĐBCPNP 2744, *Về Ủy ban Tác Động Phong Trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc Năm 1956*).

<sup>156</sup> “Phúc Trình về “tuần lễ công dân giáo dục toàn quốc,”” 11/19/1955, TĐBCPNP 2744, *Về Ủy ban Tác Động Phong Trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc Năm 1956*.

efforts at schools where professors and instructors would lecture about the rights and duties of citizens and students so that these students would bring these ideas back to their families. The second aspect of the proposed program targeted long term goals. Suggested were activities ranging from embedding propagandistic slogans in theatres and cinemas, to restructuring of Civic Education in schools, and propagation of Civic messages in theatre and cultural production.

While the proposal by the Ministry of Information did not negate the pedagogical importance of Civic Education, it differed in what should be prioritized. As argued, “the first task must be composing materials and opening classes for the training of Cadres.” For the Information Ministry, cadres, teachers, civil servants and those who would propagate in the name of the Republican state must first “absorb” civic fundamentals before they could conduct educational sessions or hold lectures. According to the criticisms relayed, given the conditions of the nation, haphazard propagation will “only generate more chaos...[and must] be enacted carefully, in such a way as to penetrate deeply into the psychology of the masses and with careful preparation as to nourish the movement.” Education, as argued, “differed with turbulent propaganda.” If the goal is to establish long-term embedding of civic values, the effort must be systematically managed, beginning with the careful cultivation of cadres. Concurrent with Trần Chánh Thành’s vision of the PSP, Civic Education efforts must be “long term, continuous, beginning in the depths of psychology and not simply superficially.”

Given the growing importance of the CDTC and the fact that the “Week” never actually occurred, it would seem that the vision of the Information Ministry rather than that of the Ministry of Education dominated. Mass education on matters of civics would begin with the cadre. Within the PSP, study materials on civics and matters related to democracy, constitutional rights, and elections appeared beginning January of 1956 and continued until after the election of the National Assembly and the ratification of the First Republican constitution in October 1956. Moreover, the CDTC had proliferated and political study committees were embedded in virtually every organ of the state by December of 1955. Indeed, within the Ministry of Education, the Campaign had taken hold by August, with political study for civil servants as well as media productions and exhibitions related to Communist Denunciation.<sup>157</sup> In November, following training by the Information Ministry, cadres established a CDTC directive committee at the Ministry of Education.<sup>158</sup> By December, CDTC activities and political study had expanded to students and teachers.<sup>159</sup> These developments indicate the integration of activities in the Ministry of Education to the broader goals of the CDTC, which in turn was directed by the Ministry of Information.

The subservience of Civic Education under the CDTC, however, did not eliminate its importance. Indeed, the pedagogical role of the state was replicated in not only the envisioned

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<sup>157</sup> “TỜ TRÌNH TỔNG QUÁT VỀ CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG CỦA BỘ QUỐC GIA GIÁO DỤC VÀ THANH NIÊN TRONG THÁNG 6-7 dl 1955,” dated 8/18/1955; “Tờ trình tổng quát về các hoạt động của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục và Thanh Niên trong tháng 8 dl 1955,” dated 9/28/1955, PTTĐỊCH 15994, *Tờ trình hoạt động từ tháng 01-12.1955 của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục*

<sup>158</sup> “BÁO CÁO THÁNG 11 năm 1955 về HOẠT ĐỘNG của BỘ QUỐC GIA GIÁO DỤC,” dated 12/29/1955, PTTĐỊCH 15994, *Tờ trình hoạt động từ tháng 01-12.1955 của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục*.

<sup>159</sup> “Báo cáo hoạt động của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục trong Tháng 12 năm 1955,” dated Feb. 1956, PTTĐỊCH 15994, *Tờ trình hoạt động từ tháng 01-12.1955 của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục*; CV 495-GD/BC/TT, dated 12/10/1955, PTTĐỊCH 16000, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục về vấn đề giáo dục năm 1955*;

role of Civic Education, but also guiding philosophy behind the PSP as well. Both the PSP and Civic Education ascribed to the belief in long term, routinized, and systematic learning targeting the “depth” of human psychology. This conjunction between the PSP and Civic Education would be enduring. In 1958, as formal guidelines for national education was established, the PSP reformed its own operational structure, redefining all subjects related to ideology and politics as “Civic Education.” Civic Education, as explicated in the 1958 PSP guidelines, meant not only the study of “duty and responsibility of citizens” or the “Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam,” but would also include matters related to communist denunciation, land reform programs, Personalism, international aid, diplomacy (particularly with the United States), errors in communist policies, history of Ngô Đình Diệm and the issues related to the Free World.<sup>160</sup> In essence, “civic education” was understood as the aggregation of necessary ideological and political knowledge to cultivate an anticommunist, nationalist citizenry.

Mobilizing education to serve the agenda of the state would continue into the Second Republic. Most telling is the fact that Ngô Khắc Tĩnh—the orchestrator of the General Information Program—would later take up the position of Education Minister following his two-year tenure as head of the Information Ministry. His vision for national education reflected that of Trần Chánh Thành a decade before, arguing that education must “lay within the general policy of saving the nation and developing the nation.”<sup>161</sup> Indeed, in February 1969, when state officials were first laying out the groundwork for the General Information Program, the Education Ministry was directed to “work closely” with student and youth groups and “cleverly lead” these groups in “political encouragement.” A Thiệu-era initiative designed to mobilize support for the war and to nurture the “anticommunist spirit,” these activities by the Education Ministry necessarily aligned with broader aims to ensure each component of society “realize their responsibility...before the fate of the nation, the history of the people to mobilize all forces for the extermination of communism and the protection of the homeland.”<sup>162</sup> Indeed, as part of the “Political Encouragement Movement,” Civic Education was directed to be “rectified...adapted to the necessities of the times.”<sup>163</sup>

Despite the interwoven history of the Education and Information branches, the relationship between public education and state ideology is less obvious and explicit than as seen through the PSP. It would be erroneous to suggest that the contents of Civic Education textbooks merely replicated state messages found in PSP study materials or propagandist texts. Civic Education school books rarely denounce communism or outline “communist atrocities.” While study materials in the PSP explicitly articulated the ideological messages of the state, school books were more ideologically ambiguous. This is evident when we compare how a single topic was discussed in PSP study materials vis-à-vis their articulation in civic education textbooks.

<sup>160</sup> “Chương Trình Học Tập” attached to CV 105-TTP/VP dated 8.18.1958, PTTĐỊCH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập Thời Sự, Công Dân Giáo Dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958.*

<sup>161</sup> “Bảng Hướng Dẫn Khai Thác Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước Quốc Hội Lưỡng Viện ngày 6/10/69” attached to CV 4043/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/ĐV dated 10/14/1969, NVKQG 299, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Nha Giám Đốc Văn Khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia, các đơn vị trực thuộc nha về học tập chính trị năm 1969.*

<sup>162</sup> “Biên Bản Phiên Họp Ủy Ban Điều Hợp Tâm Lý Chiến Trung Ương Ngày 27-2-1969 tại Bộ Thông Tin,” PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969.*

<sup>163</sup> 868/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/CT dated 3/18/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969.*

Under the General Information Program, PSP participants studied the question of “peace” and what “peace” meant in accordance with the policies of Thiệu (that is, peace through strength). A 1969 PSP material, for example, accentuated the “goodwill and determination of our Government and people in resolving the war, retrieving peace...[though] with enough strength and proactive advantage, in hopes of effectively dealing...with the communist enemy.”<sup>164</sup> In contrast, students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Civic Education classes were exposed to a similar, though diluted, rhetoric. In a 1972 Civic Education textbook, an essay lays out the role of citizens in “creating peace.” On the one hand, to achieve peace, individuals are expected to contribute to this peace-creation by “developing necessary virtues...such as justice, generosity, charity, and conciliation.” On the other hand, the essay relies on UN provisions on peace established at the end of the Second World War which ratified “ideals of freedom, demonstrating an attitude against Fascist and dictatorial regime” and notions of national sovereignty to implicitly argue against communist version of peace. Indeed, the essay repeats Thiệu’s slogans of “self-reliance” *tự lực tự cường* to “create for our country a strong enough army to combat the *invasion of other countries*” (emphasis mine).<sup>165</sup> That “invasion” clearly harkens to the “communist invasion” apparent in the broader discourse.

To conflate materials deployed for state propaganda as synonymous with that studied by students in public schools would be erroneous—a matter made clear by Olga Dror in her comparison of narratives embedded in Republican textbooks in contrast to communist ones.<sup>166</sup> Although guided by similar ideological messages and pedagogical impulses, substantial differences existed between the contents of school textbooks and what is read and discussed through PSP sessions. As shown in the example above, deliberate omissions were made to depoliticize state messages by crafting those messages in a more generalized or apolitical manner. Through the example in the textbook, the Republican state establishes a generalized principle that no independent countries should be invaded. In the broader political context of the time, however, that principle lends credence to Thiệu’s crucial demand that the communists must first cease their infiltration into the South before any talks of peace. Moreover, the accentuated principle that a country should be “strong” through “self-reliance” corroborates the contemporary Republican argument that South Vietnam must be able negotiate through military strength and advantage. This was a rejection of the presumption of “peace through slavery”—a castigation against the idea that peace must be achieved no matter the national cost.

While Personalist concepts and glorification of Ngô Đình Diệm were evidently removed after the First Republic, much of the content developed for Civic Education textbooks remained consistent throughout the Republican era. Take the 11<sup>th</sup> grade Civic Education textbook in 1960 which covered political economy. It differentiates between philosophical emphases of the “free economy” *kinh tế tự do* versus a “directed economy” *kinh tế chỉ huy*. Laying out the historical emergence and manifestation of each, the textbook situates South Vietnam—and much of Southeast Asia—as a blend of the two; rejecting the former due to trends towards economic monopolization, price manipulation, and regular systemic crises; and the later due to the inability

<sup>164</sup> “Bảng Hướng Dẫn Khai Thác Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước Quốc Hội Lưỡng Viện ngày 6/10/69” attached to CV 4043/BTT/NHK/NCKH/KH/ĐV dated 10/14/1969, NVKQG 299, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Nha Giám Đốc Văn Khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia, các đơn vị trực thuộc nha về học tập chính trị năm 1969*.

<sup>165</sup> Lê Kim Ngân, *Công Dân Giáo Dục Lớp Tám: Chương Trình Cập Nhật Hóa*, (Đại Việt, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed., 1972), 92-95.

<sup>166</sup> Olga Dror, *Making Two Vietnams: War and Youth Identities, 1965-1975*, (Cambridge University Press, 2018).



to predict and control economic developments, citing the social catastrophe of Great Leap Forward as exemplifying the failures of the philosophy. As argued, “Southeast Asian countries should implement flexible strategies, with the intent of leading, encouraging, promoting and...supporting private enterprises.” Doing so, the market can be maintained while allowing states to intervene when necessary.<sup>167</sup> A decade later, 11<sup>th</sup> grade Civic Education textbooks, again, differentiates between free and directed economies. Recategorizing “flexible strategies” as an economic philosophy onto itself, “flexibly directed economies” *kinh tế hoạch định mềm dẻo* is presented as one not only adapted to encourage economic development in “poor countries” and the “conditions of changing societies”—conditions attributed to South Vietnam. It is also defended as more so a variant of the “free economy” than one resembling the communist economic structure.<sup>168</sup>

Certain modifications were inevitably made throughout the duration of the Republic. These changes were less on the overall content of Civic Education than when students engaged certain topics. Civic Education for the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class in 1960 covered a host of issues including the definition and domains of a nation, different political systems and philosophies, and rights and duties of citizens.<sup>169</sup> By 1970, however, the 9<sup>th</sup> grade merely covered the last of these topics, including the International Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>170</sup> Matters relating to political systems, political philosophy, and national structures were moved to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum.<sup>171</sup> In its entirety, Civic Education disseminated not only political and civic knowledge for the everyday citizen, but also promoted cultural values, norms, proper behaviors and etiquettes. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum in 1973, for example, promoted personal savings and care for personal belongings. It also taught students their responsibilities for pets and livestock, personal physical health, intellectual development, parents and families, and to the broader society.<sup>172</sup> In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students learned the proper roles of students and teachers, rules at school, public etiquettes, and traffic laws.<sup>173</sup>

Far more depoliticized than its counterparts in both PSP study materials and the broader discourse evident in official speeches, newspapers, political journals, and other media outlets, Civic Education, nevertheless, serves to corroborate national ideology by establishing the generalized principles upon which political arguments can be made. Indeed, by their completion of grade school, students had learned the “correctness” of free enterprise and democratic polity, systems of governance that were far more beneficial for human progress and development than

<sup>167</sup> “Bài Đọc: Kết Quả của Chánh Sách Kinh Tế Chỉ Huy Tại Trung Cộng,” in Phạm Thị Tư, Trần Trọng San, Lê Xuân Khoa, *Công Dân Giáo Dục: Lớp Đệ Nhị*, (Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục Xuất Bản, 1960), 38-54. Such a notion was termed a “personalist economy” in a 1959 textbook, deeming the Republican model “aimed to eliminate all forms of injustice brought about by a capitalist economy, while simultaneously do not prioritize a directed economy because we follow one goal that is: to liberate the entirety of the person,” (Phạm Gia Hưng, “*Công Dân Giáo Dục: Kinh tế học lớp đệ nhị ABCD*,” [*Yên Sơn Xuất Bản*, 1959], 35).

<sup>168</sup> “4. Chính sách kinh tế hoạch định mềm dẻo,” in Bùi Trọng Chương and Phạm Tấn Hòa, *Công Dân Giáo Dục: Lớp Mười Một ABCD*, (Đường Sáng Xuất Bản, 1970), 35-42; Bùi Văn Hiệp, *Công Dân Giáo Dục: Lớp 11*, (Trường Sơn Xuất Bản, 1971), 45-55.

<sup>169</sup> Phạm Thị Tư, *Công Dân Giáo Dục Lớp Đệ Tứ*, (Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục Xuất Bản, 1960).

<sup>170</sup> Lê Kim Ngân, *Công Dân Giáo Dục: Lớp Chính* (Đại Việt, 1971).

<sup>171</sup> Trương Toại, Hồ Tí Nguyên, Mạch Từ Hải, Lâm Trọng Hiệp, Lý Thái Lập, Võ Ngọc Phước, Ngô Văn Chương, *Công Dân Giáo Dục: Lớp 12 ABCD*, (Ban Giáo Sư Đồng Tâm, 1974).

<sup>172</sup> Bùi Trọng Chương and Phạm Tấn Hòa, *Công Dân Giáo Dục: Lớp Sáu* (Đường Sáng Xuất Bản, 1973).

<sup>173</sup> Lê Kim Ngân, *Giáo Dục Công Dân: Lớp Bảy (Đệ Lục)* (Lê Kim Ngân, 1970).

“totalitarian” or “communist” states. Moreover, students were ingrained with notions of national duty, the importance of military service, and the political and economic “underdevelopment” that South Vietnam faced. Versed in the humanist philosophies of Grotius, Rousseau, and Locke, students are taught to define freedom, nationalism, citizenship, and governance through political ideals complementary to the liberal democracies of the West. In the context of the Cold War, these were ideological fundamentals that laid the foundation for critique of Communist Bloc and the championing of the Free World. Moreover, these principles complement the more fervid anticommunist rhetoric evident in the broader discourse.

## CONCLUSION

In discussing the Political Study Program, it is imperative to understand the embeddedness of the practice within the broader scope of ideological work under Vietnamese Republic. The PSP acquired a particular seemingly indispensable “value” that was perceived by not only its orchestrators, but such “value” concretely manifested as the practice was utilized within a host of state organs apart from the Information Ministry. In the attempt to perpetuate the Program, orchestrators sought to compel state agents to take seriously the work of political study, imbuing within the Program’s functioning a compulsory dimension in which participants were expected to view their activities as a “responsibility” or a “duty.” This compulsory dimension was viewed as a necessary factor for agents of the state to internalize anticommunist messages.

In enacting these mechanisms of compulsion, orchestrators marked participants for their engagement, and statements, questions, and what is opined were drafted into reports sent to the central directing body. Enthusiasm and positive participation were also met with awards and accolades, providing incentives for participatory voluntarism and initiative. As agents of the state, civil servants and soldiers were expected to carry these messages in performance of their occupational duties. In doing so, state agents actualized state ideals as they engaged with the broader population, enacting, justifying and defending state actions and programs on the ideological basis of what they have learned through study sessions. As propagators and enforcers for the state, civil servants and soldiers of the Republic comprised the infrastructure upon which an anticommunist political culture was erected.

Study materials instructed civil servants and soldiers on the ideals, necessary tasks, and importance of core state campaigns across the Republican Era. The CDTC aside, state agents read, discussed, and were presented on the Strategic Hamlet and Chiêu Hồi Programs of the First Republic, the “Greater Solidarity” Program following the Struggle Movement in 1966, the New Life Hamlet initiative, “Campaign to Support the Front,” periodic anti-corruption and anti-infiltration measures, projects relating to Rural Reconstruction and pacification, and the Phoenix Program. Rather than isolated to ministerial bodies directly involved in enacting these campaigns, these study sessions stretched across all governmental organs, carried out, for example, in the Tax Administration regarding the Phoenix Program, the Health Ministry for Chiêu Hồi, the Transportation Ministry for the New Life Hamlet. State messaging was not isolated to bodies directly involved in propaganda or information; state messages were to reach every “soldier-cadre-administrator” within the state. The vision of the PSP, after all, was to form, to harken back to the CLP, that “bloc of leadership cadre” who would faithfully carry out the policies of the state amongst the populace as the eyes, ears, mouths, and hands of the state. Political study was legitimized as an Program of value, worthy of resuscitation following the

collapse of the First Republic, and was perceived administration wide as a necessary and legitimate means for the dissemination of state messages.

The expanded use of the practice situates the PSP within a host of state programs, projects, and administrations. Its inter-ministerial character demonstrates the reach of not only the practice itself, but also the ideas and narratives disseminated through that practice. If civil servants in the Ministry of Health were studying the Strategic Hamlet for the month of May in 1963, so were officials in the Ministry of Taxation as both set of activities laid under the purview of the Civic Commissariat—the key information organ of that period. This fact demonstrates how political study was a shared, regulated practice that simultaneously allowed for the imposition of shared, standardized ideas. In this way, the core narratives of Republican anticommunism reached far beyond the site that it was created. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in Part II, even after the collapse of the First Republic, these narratives—documented through files on the PSP—would be reutilized in subsequent revivals of the Program.

PART II

REPUBLICAN ANTICOMMUNIST NARRATIVES

CHAPTER 3: THE NARRATIVE OF THE GENEVA ACCORDS

When Ngô Đình Diệm returned to Vietnam in 1954 to serve as the Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam, immediate moves were taken by Diệm and his supporters to supplant the Emperor Bảo Đại as the Head of State. Clashing with the Emperor over a multitude of administrative and political issues, Diệm organized and mobilized support for a republican form of government through the Cần Lao Party (CLP)—an anticolonialist and anticommunist political network of indigenous elites directed by his brother, Ngô Đình Nhu. Effectively a cult of personality around Diệm, the activities of the CLP allowed Diệm and his supporters to push through a “General Referendum” in October 1955, of which Diệm won some 98% of the vote in a fraudulent election. In contrast to the existing monarchist system, Diệm’s vision was one that entailed the active engagement of adept, disciplined, and moral citizens and a powerful state that would guide the populace towards moral and cultural progress, the enactment of “true democracy” [*dân chủ thật sự*]<sup>1</sup> political self-determination, and economic self-sufficiency. His endeavors for a “modern” Vietnamese Republic were not without supporters.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to this National Referendum to be held in October of 1955, a series of top executives were replaced in the administration in May as part of Diệm’s new cabinet. Among those newly appointed was Trần Chánh Thành as the Minister of Information and Psychological Warfare.<sup>3</sup> In July of 1955, just two months after his appointment, Trần Chánh Thành and his Ministry supervised a political and propagandistic offensive to replace Bảo Đại and seat Diệm as Head of State. A core strategy was to utilize the “injustice” of the Geneva Accords to legitimize Diệm as the sole and true leader of Vietnam and a champion of anticommunism who could safeguard South Vietnam from the impending Communist threat from the north.

On July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1955, four days before the first anniversary of the signings in Geneva, Diệm formally established his position against the Accords. The Accords had divided Vietnam into two temporary ceasefire zones, established procedures for the regrouping of political and military forces, and scheduled nationwide elections for the reunification of Vietnam in July of 1956. Enactment of these provisions, however, was, from the start, riddled with issues; not the least of which was the refusal of the State of Vietnam to sign the Accords and acknowledge its validity. In contesting the Accords, Diệm’s position was adamant.

As Diệm argued, although the State of Vietnam was committed to the reunification and peace of the country, they rejected the proposal laid out in the Geneva Accords because the independence and reunification of the country must be “in freedom, rather than in slavery.” The Việt Minh, as Diệm described them, were unlikely to satisfy the requirement of free and fair elections. Furthermore, the Việt Minh-controlled North must demonstrate that they place the “good of the nation” that of communism. The foundations of independence and reunification must come through “democracy” and not that of authoritarianism and terrorism as committed by the Việt Minh. This rejection of the Accords laid within the legal and political rights of the State

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<sup>1</sup> The term “dân chủ thật sự” was regularly invoked by the series of motions collected by the Information Ministry. E.g., “Kiến Nghị của Toàn Thể Công Giáo Baclieu,” dated 7/20/1955; “Kiến nghị của toàn thể công chức tinh lý Bạc Liêu,” dated 7/17/1955, TĐBCPNP 1125: *Công văn trao đổi giữa tòa đại biểu CP tại Nam Việt với Bộ Công Chánh sở du lịch, bộ điền thổ và cả cách điền địa, bộ thông tin và thanh niên, bộ tư pháp, bộ quốc phòng năm 1955.*

<sup>2</sup> See comprehensive outline of Diệm’s understand of democracy in Miller, 136-142.

<sup>3</sup> CV Số 436/VPĐB, Folder No. 1125, TĐBCPNP (1945-1959), *Công Văn Trao Đổi Giữa tòa đại biểu CP tại Nam Việt với Bộ Công Chánh-Sở Du Lịch, bộ điền thổ và cả cách điền địa, bộ thông tin và thanh niên, bộ tư pháp, bộ quốc phòng năm 1955.*

of Vietnam. As Diệm argued, “we did not sign the Geneva Accords...[thus] are not bound in any way by these agreements, signed against the will of the people.”<sup>4</sup>

The statement became a key tool through which Diệm’s supporters mobilized for his positioning against Bảo Đại. To ensure that Diệm’s message was properly disseminated, Trần Chánh Thành issued a directive on the same day as the Prime Minister’s speech requiring that all civil and administrative organizations are to “study Communist Denunciation material” and develop a “Communist Denunciation resolution” as the first steps in inaugurating the Campaign. The topics of mandatory study: The Geneva Accords, Diem’s position on the Accords, and “the sins of the Vietnamese communists.”<sup>5</sup>

From July 17<sup>th</sup> until late August, the Ministry of Information collated signatures and documented “resolutions” *kiến nghị* from governmental and non-governmental bodies in support of Diệm’s position against the Accords. The collected signatures came from as far as Sóc Trang, Rạch Giá, Bến Tre, as well as those from the Capitol center served as documentation of support for Diệm that could be presented to the Representative Assembly.<sup>6</sup> Although the speech delivered by Diệm on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July did not make explicit his contention for the head of state, the signatures gathered, nevertheless, articulated support for Diem’s bid for the Head of State.

The Department of Agriculture and Habitat, for example, concluded not only to agree with the statements made by Diệm against the Geneva Accords, but also “together recommend [đồng thanh kiến thị]...support for the governmental position led by Prime Minister Ngô regarding the unification of Vietnam and general elections on the basis of freedom.”<sup>7</sup> The Capitol’s Civil Servants in Saigon-Chợ Lớn were more explicit in their support for Diem. Alongside supporting Diem’s position on the Geneva Accords, the entirety of the Capitol’s Civil Servants also recognizes that “in 1 year of office, Prime Minister Ngô has brought clear victories for the Nation, both domestic and foreign.” The Union of Civil Servants in the capitol also “thoroughly” supported the ideological position of Diệm, “completely trust[ed]” that “Prime Minister Ngô” would lead the creation of a “strong national polity built upon a progressive

<sup>4</sup> “Lời Tuyên Bố Truyền Thanh của Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ ngày 16-7-1955 về Hiệp Định Geneve và vấn đề thống nhất đất nước,” in *Con Đường Chính Nghĩa: Độc Lập, Dân Chủ, Hiệu Triệu, Diễn Văn và Tuyên Cáo của Tổng Thống Ngô Đình Diệm*, *Sở Báo Thông Tin Phủ Tổng Thống*: 1956, 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> Official planning for a nationwide initiation of a sustained political mobilization against communism began on 13<sup>th</sup> of July 1955. Its first task was to create a national committee to direct the movement. When formed, the committee was led by Phạm Văn Diệm, representative of the National Revolutionary Movement. The Ministry of Information, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of National Defense were the three governmental bodies represented on the Central Committee. Elected as representatives were Lê Khải Trạch, Lê Sĩ Giai, and Nguyễn Phương Đàng, respectively. “Biên Bản Đại Hội Nghị Thảo Luận về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng nói chung và tuần lễ phát động chiến dịch ấy nói riêng.” on 7.14.1955. in PTTVNCH: 14734

<sup>6</sup> Folder No. 1125: *Công Văn Trao Đổi giữa Tòa Đại biểu CP tại Nam Việt với Bộ Công Chánh Sở Du Lịch, Bộ Điện Thổ và Cải Cách Điền Địa, Bộ Thông Tin và Thanh Niên, Bộ Tư Pháp, Bộ Quốc Phòng năm 1955*. Tòa Đại Biểu Chính Phủ Nam Phần (1945-1959), TTLTQGII.

<sup>7</sup> Resolution adopted by Sở Canh Nong Nam Việt và Thảo Cầm Viên Saigon as part of CV Số 8.398.CCNU received by the Representative Assembly on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 1955. Folder No. 1125: “Công Văn Trao Đổi giữa Tòa Đại biểu CP tại Nam Việt với Bộ Công Chánh Sở Du Lịch, Bộ Điện Thổ và Cải Cách Điền Địa, Bộ Thông Tin và Thanh Niên, Bộ Tư Pháp, Bộ Quốc Phòng năm 1955.” Tòa Đại Biểu Chính Phủ Nam Phần (1945-1959), TTLTQGII.

society,” “resoundingly praise[d]...[Diệm’s] spirit of service,” and vowed stand behind this “true leader of the nation.”<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, in those early summer days of July, the subject of the Accords was already politically intertwined with the campaign of “communist denunciation” and Diệm’s claim to political legitimacy. For the duration of the year, Diệm’s position on the Accords was foundational to his campaign against Bảo Đại. His success was, in no small part, the result of the mobilizing efficiency of the CDTC and the integration of Diệm’s position on the Accords as a fundamental component of early Republican anticommunist discourse. The signatures collected served not only document support for Diệm. For many of these organizations, resolutions adopted along with these signatures also authorized the initiation of the Communist Denunciation Campaign within their jurisdiction.

### *Traitors and Deceivers*

When the PSP was officially initiated as part of the CDTC on August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1955, Diệm’s position on the Accords became the cornerstone of the contents articulated in study documents. Among the materials assigned at that first conference for political study,<sup>9</sup> one was explicitly designated to explore the “Origins and Result of the Signing in Geneva.”<sup>10</sup> The piece begins with a depiction of the First Indochina War which ultimately demonstrated to the Vietnamese people that the “Viet Minh were Communists who wore the cloak of nationalism, cunningly hiding [their communist nature] from the beginning to exploit the unwavering spirit of the people for their benefit and that of the communist bloc.” The fundamental argument of the piece is that these historically deceptive communists were lackeys who introduced the Geneva Accords under Soviet orders; the result of which was the division of Vietnam into two nations and “offered North Vietnam to the Soviet Union-China.”

This scheme on the part of international communism was, firstly, due to a turn in Soviet strategy after the death of Josef Stalin to fight a “cold war” by manipulating the slogan of “peace.” What this meant was a turn in Soviet strategy to acquire international sympathy while, clandestinely, wage campaigns of political warfare and propaganda. Secondly, the Geneva Accords laid out by the communists did little to punish France who has wrecked the country during the “9 year of smoke and fire.” In benefit to the communists and the French colonialists, the Accords was sought by the Vietminh to acquire membership in the United Nations while allowing a defeated France to retain a measure of power in Indochina. Lastly, the Geneva Accords were highly beneficial to the Vietnamese communist who were “not yet able to continue the war any longer” because of present economic and political woes brought about by the war. Without means of waging regular war, the communists have resorted to low-intensity forms of conflict, particularly through guerrilla infiltration and propaganda.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Resolution adopted by Công Chức Đô Thành Saigon-Cholon as part of CV Số 8.398.CCNU received by the Representative Assembly on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, 1955. Folder No. 1125: “Công Văn Trao Đổi giữa Tòa Đại biểu CP tại Nam Việt với Bộ Công Chánh Sở Du Lịch, Bộ Điền Thổ và Cải Cách Điền Địa, Bộ Thông Tin và Thanh Niên, Bộ Tư Pháp, Bộ Quốc Phòng năm 1955.” Tòa Đại Biểu Chính Phủ Nam Phần (1945-1959), TTLTQGII.

<sup>9</sup> CV Số 1578/BTT/VP dated 8.13.1955 in PTTVNCH: 29164, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v Tô Chức các khóa Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1955.*

<sup>10</sup> “Lịch Học Tập tại Cơ Quan” dated 8.16.1955 in PTTVNCH: 29164.

<sup>11</sup> “Nguyên Nhân và Kết Quả của Cuộc Ký Kết tại Geneve.” in PTTVNCH: 29164.



The depiction of Vietnamese communists as deceitful national sellouts who did the bidding of the “red imperialists” *đế quốc đỏ* became a staple caricature during the First Republic. The document “The Evil Sins of the Việt Cộng”—another of the original materials handed out on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August—depicts this betrayal as a “scheme” orchestrated by the Viet Cong in collaboration with the colonialists. This betrayal was undoubtedly due for outrage and condemnation because of the 9 years of war which subjected the “entirety of the Vietnamese people...[to] countless suffering, child leaving their father, wives leaving their husbands, houses destroyed, villages torched forcing citizens to flee to the green jungles, the infected waters in the hopes of independence for the country and freedom for the people.” Emotionally laden, the narrative of the Geneva Accords bounded communists—the deceivers—to a betrayal of Vietnamese nationalist yearnings and the perpetrators of the vivid horrors of war. The piece further details what the communist’s proposal of “normal relations” meant. The text argues that “normal relations” was a means through which communists could “infiltrate, dominate the country of Vietnam to offer to Soviet-China through propaganda.” They utilized this cleverly phrased term to “seduce” civilians to give up their rice harvests “to offer to the Communist Chinese in exchange for weapons and arms while leaving the Southern population in starvation and misery.”<sup>12</sup>

In addition, communists’ “treason” included more than “offering” of the North to red imperialism. Rather, the “normal relations” and the communists’ push for a General Referendum was merely a precursor for the eventual invasion of the South by Communist China. With this impending threat of not simply communist domination, but *Chinese* communist domination, the piece called for a spirit of alertness and adamant safeguarding against communist lies and deception. The piece concludes by restating the core of Diêm’s July 1955 speech, arguing that because “our government did not sign the Geneva Accords, then our people are not required to follow through with its traitorous implements.” Although the South Vietnamese are “peace loving,” they will stand against the deceptive type of “peace” offered by the communists.<sup>13</sup>

In 1957, the Minister of Information confidently declared that “virtually every locality had completed [the study of the Geneva Accords] in the last 2 years.”<sup>14</sup> During these two years, additional study materials were independently developed by various administrative organs to reinforce the notions established through the CDTC. One document, utilized in political study by the Committee for Politics of the Representative Assembly of South Vietnam in 1955, expanded this narrative of the Geneva Accords. The piece—also entitled “The Evil Sins of the Việt Cộng”—describes the 1954 document a “text that sells out the nation.” It rejects the terms of “normal relations” between North and South—restating the original piece—as a scheme by the Viet Cong to send “their cadres to infiltrate the populace, military, and government with the intention of disrupting civic order and security” while trading “rice to the Chinese Communists for guns” in preparation for continued war.<sup>15</sup>

Another study document, utilized in the General Office of Migration, characterizes “normal relations” as a scheme that employs the scheduled 1956 General Referendum to aid “Soviet-China infiltration of Indochina.” Although “sounding very gentle and humanistic,” the

<sup>12</sup> “Những Tội Ác Của Việt Cộng.” in PTTVNCH: 29164.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> CV Số 368/BTT/CTTL/M dated 7.1.1957 in Folder No. 2488, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế Việt Nam, *tập lưu công văn của ban chỉ đạo tổ cộng, ban hướng dẫn học tập năm 1957-1958*.

<sup>15</sup> “Những Tội Ác Của Việt Cộng.” in TĐBCPNP, No. F 6-113/2416, *Tài liệu học tập chính trị năm 1955*.

communist's efforts to establish normal relations was evidence of how the communists were "beating the drums while stealing"—meaning they call for peace while preparing for war. Indeed, "peace," as conceptualized by the communists, is simply a deception that appeals to individuals who are "pacifists, afraid of war, thus weakening the warriors of the nation, and enabling the communists to have enough time to prepare for political war." When it comes to "peace," one must be aware that, for the communists, "peace" is simply one of the many "strategic measures...designed to forward their intent of volatizing the globe."<sup>16</sup>

### *Authoritarianism and Democracy*

As the CDTC came to a close, modifications were beginning to be introduced to the Geneva narrative. The first major development came in 1957 as the country prepared to commemorate the third anniversary of the Geneva signings. While much of the contents of study documents remained similar,<sup>17</sup> emphasis was laid on the issue of "freedom" to demarcate differences between the Republican South and the Communist North.<sup>18</sup> The matter of "freedom" and "democracy" as preliminary conditions for reunification had been a core aspect of Diêm's original declaration against the Accords in July of 1955. However, much of the study materials from that period were devoted to crafting a caricature of Vietnamese communism as treasonous and deceptive. In 1957, the review of the Geneva Accords utilized the issues of "freedom of movement, freedom of organization, freedom of press, and freedom of occupation" as a rhetorical tool to contrast the political conditions between north and south. Indeed, as argued by Trần Chánh Thành in a directive, failure of unification was not due to any actions of the Republic, but rather blame must be placed on the communists who failed to establish adequate conditions for free and fair elections. Conditions were evidently not achieved by the communist side due to a litany of evidence publicized through the CDTC that documented the repressive nature of the communist regime in the north. According to Trần Chanh Thành, "the people in the North currently face heavy repression and a form of monitoring that is tightly controlled by the Viet Cong...[,] the Viet Cong always use violence to repress the people...[and] they are presently quartering troops in the houses of civilians in many villages...[with] intentions to monitor and repress."<sup>19</sup>

The contrast between the "free" South and the "repressive" North was an elaboration of the position that the Republic had established in 1955 and built on certain demands made by the Saigon—namely the cessation of monitoring and repression of their compatriots and laying foundations for democratic practices in the north. The 1955 position of the Republic argued that any elections for reunification must be held "in conditions that are completely free" and demanded that the North provide evidence that they placed the "good of the nation above

<sup>16</sup> "Cương Quyết Đập Tan Những Chủ Trương "Hiệp Thương" Thiết Lập "Quan Hệ Bình Thường" của Việt Cộng" in Folder No. 52 *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tổ Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Another modification entails that the passing of the scheduled date for countrywide election made it possible to argue that any effective power of the Accords—whether military or political—no longer applies. The Accords, ultimately, was an "issue of the past" *việc đã qua* and any further discussion of applying the measures of the accords should be viewed with suspicion.

<sup>19</sup> CV Số 368/BTT/CTTL/M dated 7.1.1957 in Folder No. 2488, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế Việt Nam, *tập lưu công văn của ban chỉ đạo tổ cộng, ban hướng dẫn học tập năm 1957-1958*.

benefits for communism.” In 1957, these conditions were defined as “freedom of movement, freedom of organization, freedom of press, and freedom of occupation.” Prerequisites for free and fair elections for reunification evolved into a broader position that demanded the northern government adhere to democratic practices. Believing that it was their duty to vocalize the suppressed voices of the northern population, the Republic mobilized a “struggle to demand freedom and democratization of the North”—a staple political mantra for the years to come.<sup>20</sup>

This trend towards an anticommunist critique premised on “democracy” and “freedom” was further evident in a 1958 Declaration which reaffirmed the Republican position against the Geneva Accords. Delivered in April, the document argues that the South “[had] the responsibility to explain to our compatriots in the north, those who are currently isolated from truthful information and the world, the contradictions between the words and actions of the leadership in Ha Noi.” The declaration revisits the fundamentals of the South’s opposition to the Geneva Accords by placing the blame of division on the communists, reminding the north of those who migrated south, and claiming that the north was attempting to use its larger population and military to offset any countrywide elections held.<sup>21</sup>

The declaration clarifies the Republic’s opposition to the holding elections for the reunification of the country and demonstrates the political contrast between the North and the South. First, the 1958 Declaration argues that the north has never held an election while the south has held both the General Referendum against Bao Dai and its own National Assembly elections as evidence of delivering on its democratic promise.<sup>22</sup> Second, while documenting communist atrocities through statistics of those prevented from going South, the document called upon the North to liberalize its economy so the “compatriots in the north can have the freedom to live and work improving their standard of living,” to cease its propaganda and allow communications of family members living in the north to the south without fear of repercussion, and to institute democratic rights and liberties.<sup>23</sup> Finally, the document conjoins the “freedom” experienced in the South with the freedom of self-determination. The declaration argues that the aid that the north receives makes it subservient to international communism as it forces its own citizens to learn communist ideology and follow the directives of the Soviet Union and China, whereas the relationship that the south have with the United States—and other nations—is based on equal partnership in accordance to agreements made between the two nations. Not only is the South diplomatically independent, it “[does] not acquiesce to a foreign ideology” and “no one [in the South] is forced to hang portraits of foreign figureheads.” The declaration ends stating: “The Government of the Republic of Vietnam and the people of Vietnam would never accept an election lacking in freedom and honesty.”<sup>24</sup>

While the narrative established in 1955 focused on the caricaturizing of communist agents as deceptive and traitorous, by 1958, the narrative had evolved into an argument about democracy as the fundamental difference between the two sides and a platform for glorifying the achievements of the Republican government. In contrast to the communists who committed atrocities, the anticommunist South were “righteous” defenders of freedom and democracy. Unlike the North, the Republican South were not “traitors” in either actions or ideology because

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Original declaration posted in *Saigon Mói* on 4-26-1958 and 4-28-1958

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

international aid to the South was not premised on subservience to stronger powers and Personalist philosophy was organically Vietnamese. Furthermore, collated “sins of the communists” evidenced that the communists were not simply traitors and deceivers, they were also kidnappers, assassins, bandits, and terrorists in their “Revolution to Liberate the South.” In the North, the communists were authoritarians who suppressed any meaningful freedoms, prevented individuals from migrating to the south, and communist economic policies devalued the northern standards of life.

### *Military Aggression and Transgression*

Alongside shifts in the Geneva Narrative towards a critique of the “repression” in the North, 1958 also saw the beginning of claims which castigated the communists as military aggressors and transgressors of the Accords they had signed. Indeed, alongside its emphasis on “democracy” and “freedom,” the 1958 Declaration by the Republic pointed to increasing military build-up in the North as an indication that the communists were preparing for war. This point did not come into full focus until January of 1959 when the PSP was utilized to defend the Republic against a response by Phạm Văn Đồng, the Prime Minister in Hanoi, who relayed the denunciations against the South on northern airwaves. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of January 1959, Trần Chánh Thành sent out a memo requesting the in-depth re-study of the 1958 Declaration by the Republic and Phạm Văn Đồng’s response.<sup>25</sup> Throughout the month of January, participants relied on the April 1958 declaration of the Republic to vehemently criticize the speech by Phạm Văn Đồng.

The 1958 declaration was unique from previous statements given by the Republic on the Accords because it presented the communist enemy as a violent aggressor and itself as the non-aggressor.<sup>26</sup> In study sessions, this issue of military aggression was emphasized. Political study of Phạm Văn Đồng’s speech was divided into two sections. The first section dealt with the position of the Northern government and the second section tackled the 4 demands relayed by Phạm Văn Đồng: a) both sides must not participate in any international military alliances, b) request for trade between the two sides, c) the cessation of all propaganda to divide the country, and d) request that women and children are allowed freedom of movement to visit their relatives. These four demands by Phạm Văn Đồng were largely condemned as propaganda meant to assuage resistance in the north to communist rule. The brunt of the content in study materials, however, dealt with military concerns.<sup>27</sup>

Two sentences were extrapolated from the first portion of Phạm Văn Đồng’s speech: “The South is preparing for war” and “today, rural production in the South has dropped to the point of poverty and in the Central Highlands, the peasants are starving.” However, rather than dwelling into the economic criticism raised by the north, the issue of military mobilization took

<sup>25</sup> CV Số 6/HTTU/TT dated 1.8.1959. Folder No. 20192, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị “Đối Phó với công tác tuyên truyền giáo dục, hướng dẫn nhân dân đấu tranh của Việt Cộng” năm 1959*. While certain ministries, like that of Education, conducted political study sessions on the declaration in May of 1958, the issue did not become a proposed topic for government-wide political study until January of 1959 (CV Số 244-GD/BC/TT dated 5.2.1958. Folder No. 26, NVKQG, *Nha Văn Khố Quốc Gia Phòng HC và KT, Lập Tài Liệu của Bộ QGGD, UBLĐ Học Tập TW về Học Tập Chính Trị Năm 1958*).

<sup>26</sup> Original declaration posted in *Saigon Mới* on 4-26-1958 and 4-28-1958. The issue of military mobilization in the north was a minor section that was also apparent in the 7-26-1957 declaration by the Republic.

<sup>27</sup> “Tài Liệu số 14: Phản Ứng của Việt Cộng Đối Với Bản Tuyên Cáo 26-4-58 của Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” in Folder No. 20187, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TW, Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Bản Tuyên Cáo và cuốn “Bạch Thư” của Chính Phủ VNCH năm 1958*.

dominance. Repeating the argument of the 1958 Declaration, PSP session contrasted the “150,000” troops count of the South Vietnamese army with the 350,000-strong North Vietnamese army. With these “statistics” as evidence, study sessions demand that the North demilitarize to match the existing troop count of the South. Indeed, it was not the South who was preparing for war, but rather the North. The allegation by Phạm Văn Đồng that the “South is preparing for war” is a propagandistic statement that disguised the mandatory military service and martial law employed in the North. The North had refused to release its military numbers and national security expenditures. Indeed, “when the Viet Cong propose to lessen troop count, they are increasing it.” To reinforce this point, the document argues that “whether they [the communist] claim to lessen their military count or their military budget to however much, this is no guarantee...[because] the Viet Cong lies, no one with a critical mind can firmly believe their words.”<sup>28</sup>

Building on claims of military aggression by the North, the political study turned to the issue of “communist violation” to reinforce the Republican stance. In November, PSP sessions were directed to engage in the study of “White Papers” released by the Republican government in July of that year. Written in French, the “White Papers” was meant to demonstrate to an international audience the Vietnamese communist’s “violation of the Geneva Accords regarding the two matters of military and civil and condemn the Viet Cong’s policy of disrupting and threatening peace.”<sup>29</sup> In November, a summarized draft (in Vietnamese) of the “White Papers” was distributed by the Office of the President for political study on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November. That draft made clear that “The Viet Cong signed the Geneva Accords then, precisely the Viet Cong, violated the agreements they had signed” and “the Republic of Vietnam did not sign the Geneva Accord...[but,] because we desire peace, the Republic of Vietnam has promised to not use violence to oppose any measures to end the war, and will help support the international community to implement the ceasefire and build peace.” Listed in the document was a litany of “violations” which include the prevention of individuals and families from migrating South,<sup>30</sup> destruction of private and communal property before communist forces retreated to the north,<sup>31</sup> and taking revenge on political enemies—specifically referring to the northern land reforms.<sup>32</sup>

What was most important in the “White Papers,” however, were violated agreements on military matters. To start, the north increased its military, imported arms, and refused to

<sup>28</sup> “Tài Liệu số 14: Phản Ứng của Việt Cộng Đối Với Bản Tuyên Cáo 26-4-58 của Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” in Folder No. 20187, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TW, Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Bản Tuyên Cáo và cuốn “Bạch Thư” của Chính Phủ VNCH năm 1958.*

<sup>29</sup> “Quyển Bạch thư dày 158 trang, viết bằng Pháp văn nhằm mục đích trình bày trước dự luận Quốc Tế hồ sơ đầy đủ về các vụ Việt Cộng vi phạm hiệp định Geneve về hai phương diện Quân Sự và Dân Sự, và tố cáo chính sách Việt Cộng phá hoại và đe dọa hòa bình.” Quoted from “Bản Tóm Tắt: Quyển Bạch Thư do Việt Nam Cộng Hòa công bố tháng 7-1959” in Folder No. 20187, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TW, Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Bản Tuyên Cáo và cuốn “Bạch Thư” của Chính Phủ VNCH năm 1958.*

<sup>30</sup> Point 14-d in the Geneva Accords: “Trong thời gian kể từ khi hiệp định này bắt đầu có hiệu lực đến ngày hoàn thành việc chuyển quân, nếu có những thường dân ở một khu thuộc quyền kiểm soát của bên này mà muốn sang ở vùng giao cho bên kia, thì nhà chức trách của khu trên phải cho phép và giúp đỡ sự di chuyển ấy.”

<sup>31</sup> Point 15-d: “Hai bên không dùng thứ bất cứ hành động nào hủy hoại hoặc phá hoại tài sản công cộng và xâm phạm đến sinh mệnh và tài sản của thường dân. Hai bên cũng không dung thứ bất cứ sự can thiệp nào vào nội chính địa phương.”

<sup>32</sup> Point 14-c: “Mỗi bên cam kết không dung cách trả thù hay phân biệt đối xử nào đối với những cá nhân hoặc tổ chức, vì lý do hoạt động của họ trong lúc chiến tranh, và cam kết bảo đảm những quyền tự do dân chủ của họ.”

exchange all prisoners of war during the period in which the Geneva Accords were in effect. Further, these cited violations emphasized that communist forces were left in the south to continue “war and terrorism against the people” while infiltrating additional forces to destabilize the south. The construction of antigovernment organizations such as the “Fatherland Front,” hiding weapons and arms, and assassinations were evidence of the north’s “scheme to continue the war.”<sup>33</sup> Indeed, depicted through the “White Papers” was the continued narration of communists “beating the drums while stealing.” Deception and treason remain fundamental aspects of the caricature but was extended to demonstrate aggression and violation of not just the Vietnamese people, but an international agreement.

The importance of these developments in the narrative of the Geneva Accords can only be appreciated within the political context of 1958-59. It must be recalled that by September of 1958, political study had shifted from being a CDTC domain to one headed by the Office of the President. This shift in PSP leadership is indicative of changes in domestic political concerns. No longer was politics to be dominated by mere “communist denunciation,” but anticommunism had to be situated within larger aims for economic development and international recognition. The shift in the discourse towards “military aggression” and “violation of the Accords” was a means to continue the fundamental precepts established during the CDTC while shaping those precepts to the new political direction of the nation. The adamant “rejection” of the Geneva Accords was no longer emphasized in this narrative because that would ultimately entail the “rejection” of an internationally established agreement headed by economic and political benefactors like France, the United States, and Britain. Rather, to build international legitimacy and attain recognition, the “rejection” of this international agreement must be delegated to the communist north which vied for the same recognition.

In addition to these new internationalist concerns, the growing activities of insurgent forces dominated the South Vietnamese press. Newspaper reports from February 1959 onward are replete with cited assassinations, arson, and banditry caused by communist perpetrators. The newspaper *Saigon Mới* went so far as calling, in an op-ed, for the capital punishment for those who committed these “acts of terrorism.”<sup>34</sup> In response to these heightened activities and the sensitive conditions surrounding the National Assembly elections of 1959, a series of harsh and draconian revisions were made to pre-existing laws beginning in April. The increase of, and crackdown on, anti-government activities transformed the caricature of the communist—once predominantly imagined to be authoritarian leaders in the north—into a southern militarized danger who existed in close proximity. In that same year, the concept of the “communist sleeper agent” *cộng sản nằm vùng* made its way into PSP study documents and discussion.<sup>35</sup> These

<sup>33</sup> “Bản Tóm Tắt: Quyển Bạch Thư do Việt Nam Cộng Hòa công bố tháng 7-1959” in Folder No. 20187, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TW, Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Bán Tuyên Cáo và cuốn “Bạch Thư” của Chính Phủ VNCH năm 1958.*

<sup>34</sup> “Mấy lâu nay trên báo chí thường thấy đăng vài tin tức về các vụ cướp của, giết người gây ra bởi bọn phiến Cộng, bọn phá hoại... ở các thôn làng heo lạnh. Các vụ khủng bố này ngày gần đây càng gia tăng chúng tỏ bọn chung scos một kết hoạch hoạt động phá hoại hân hoi....Điểm thứ hai mà có thể nói là điểm chính alf những kẻ coups bóc, khủng bố khoogn bị trừng trị nặng để làm gương, nên chúng vẫn hoàn hành mạnh. Vì thế chugns tôi thấy smootij điều cần phải giải quyết ngay để chấm dứt tình trạng giết người cướp của do những tên khủng bố gây ra là đề nghị với Chánh quyền lên án tội đa đối với những tên khủng bố bị bắt tại trận. GIẾT NGƯỜI THÌ PHẢI ĐỀN MẠN- đó là một cách giải quyết hợp lý nhất.” 8.4.1959

<sup>35</sup> First instance recorded in collected PSP documents came in January of 1959 in the study of Phạm Văn Đồng’s speech. It was utilized to explain why the communist Prime Minister delivered his speech: “Cán bộ Việt Cộng và

agents—directed from the north—were armed stay-behind communists and infiltrators who existed since the Accords were signed. While the “hunt” for communist agents in the South existed since the CDTC-era, this early period emphasized “political rather than military” methods.<sup>36</sup> In 1959, a military solution began to progressively offset a political one. “Infiltration” in 1959 no longer meant mere “disruption of civic order and security” or the secretive penetration of communist agents into government and civil bodies. In 1959, infiltration meant the presence of an actual armed force engaged in violence, assassinations and guerrilla war. By 1961, this “infiltration” led Diệm to declare a nation-wide “State of Emergency.”

The new themes of military aggression and violation of the Accords became staple aspects of the Geneva narrative for the remainder of the First Republic. One political study document scheduled for the 31<sup>st</sup> of March utilizes the Geneva Accords as a time marker for when communist infiltrators began mobilizing armed insurgent activities.<sup>37</sup> This deployment of the Geneva Accords was repeated again in September of 1960. Perhaps one of his last acts as a leading member of the PSP, Trần Chánh Thành held a national conference for presenters to discuss the topic of the Soviet’s policy of “peaceful coexistence.”<sup>38</sup> In the assigned study document, the Geneva Accords was utilized to narrate the operations of communist agents in the South. This was the period when the Liên Việt Front transformed into the Fatherland Front, and subsequently the National Liberation Front. The idea of “peaceful coexistence,” similar to the demand for “normal relations” by the north since 1955, was a strategy by international communism to militarily infiltrate the south.<sup>39</sup> In 1961, one political study in July presented the question “How does the Viet Cong hope to invade the South?” during discussion. The answer given the accepted narrative of the time: “The Viet Cong utilizes the Geneva Accords, in that it writes after 2 years there will be general elections to reunify the country. They grasp onto that fallacious dream of elections to infiltrate the south.”<sup>40</sup>

### *Discursive Continuity During the Interregnum*

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nhất là bọn nằm vùng hoang mang trước sự đòi hỏi của dân chúng vì phải bỏ tay chờ chi thị quá chậm của nguy quyền Việt Cộng không thể giải đáp thắc mắc của đồng bào”(“Tài Liệu số 14: Phản Ứng của Việt Cộng Đối Với Bản Tuyên Cáo 26-4-58 của Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” in Folder No. 20187, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TW, Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Bản Tuyên Cáo và cuốn “Bách Thư” của Chính Phủ VNCH năm 1958*).

<sup>36</sup> “Cho đến nay, cuộc đấu tranh đó đã chuyển từ hình thái quân sự sang hình thái chính trị, tuy ít đổ máu nhưng gay go quyết liệt hơn.” (“Học Tập Chính Trị” from CDTC National Conference held on Nov. 12, 1955, Folder No. 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tố Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tố Cộng năm 1955*. Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn, TTLTQGII).

<sup>37</sup> “Âm Mưu Phá Hoại của VC trong Các Cơ Quan Đoàn Thể của Ta” Folder No. 20359, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v Tìm Hiểu Chất “Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam” năm 1960*.

<sup>38</sup> CV Số 87-HTTU/TT dated 9.24.1960 in Folder No. 20357, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dẫn học tập “đường lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” năm 1960*.

<sup>39</sup> “Chiến Thuật ‘Sống Chung Hòa Bình’ của Cộng Sản,” in Folder No. 20357, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dẫn học tập “đường lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” năm 1960*.

<sup>40</sup> CV Số 37/THT/Q7 dated 7.26.1961. “Biên Bản buổi học tập chính trị ngày 26-7-1961 tại Tổ Học Tập Cảnh Sát cuộc quận Bảy về đề tài ‘Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc ngày lễ Song Thất 1961.’” Folder No. 20531, PTTĐICH, *Biên bản học tập chính trị và tố cộng của các đơn vị tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8. 1961*.

The collapse of the First Republic in 1963 did not eliminate the Geneva Accords as a dominant narrative. Rather, it was appropriated and redeployed by subsequent regimes which drew upon the existing ideological repertoires to justify their own rise of power. Indeed, in a twist of historical irony, the same narrative that once propelled Diệm into the Presidency became redeployed by those who usurped his rule. Despite the intense social changes and political unrest that characterized the period that followed Diệm, the Interregnum was also a period of discursive continuity. Diệm, his family, and his administration were vilified as corrupt and authoritarian during this period. However, the Geneva Narrative that was originally institutionalized under Diệm rule would survive long after his death. Rather than existing as a defunct ideological vestige of the First Republic, the Geneva Narrative, in fact, remained core to the politics, state messaging, and ideological discourse of the Republican Interregnum and after.

Most evident of this discursive continuity was the 1964 “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận*. One of the lasting institutional accomplishments of the short-lived administration of Nguyễn Khánh, July 20<sup>th</sup> would become an annual commemorative holiday for the remainder of the Republican Era. In commemoration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Geneva signings, the 1964 Day of National Resentment involved public remembrance and articulation of the “10-years of communist atrocities” *mười năm tội ác Việt Cộng*. Largely state orchestrated, the week leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1964 involved state-funded public events stoking the “resentment” *uất hận* of the Geneva Accords including speeches by high-ranking generals, a cultural competition, galleries depicting communist crimes, and orchestrated mass rallies.<sup>41</sup>

While the focus of these commemorations was directed at “communist atrocities,” these events proselytized the ideological rationale for a “Northward March” *Bắc Tiến*—a relatively vague political lexicon that came to mean of bringing the war to the North. In the press, the “Northward March” was conceptualized as anywhere from American aerial bombardment of North Vietnam to a South Vietnamese ground invasion initiated by South Vietnamese commandos parachuted into territories above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel.<sup>42</sup> Seizing this ideological novelty, the “Northward March” was utilized to by the regime to unify the discordant political components in the Republic—a discord that was growing increasingly problematic—around an

<sup>41</sup> “CUỘC THI SÁNG TÁC VĂN NGHỆ DO NHÀ VO TUYẾN VIỆT NAM TỔ CHỨC NGÀY 20-7-1964,” dated 6/5/1964; “BIÊN BẢN PHIÊN HỢP LIÊN BỘ NGÀY 19-6-1964 VÀO HỒI 16g tại Phủ Đặc Ủy Thanh Niên và Thủ Thao v/v chuẩn bị cho kế hoạch phát động Chương Trình Công Tác Xã hội của Thanh Niên hướng về ngày QUỐC HẬN 20-7,” “CHƯƠNG TRÌNH LỄ QUỐC HẬN 10 NĂM TỘI ÁC VIỆT CỘNG 20-7-1964” attached to 161/BTB/TĐTL/ĐV/PG dated 7/7/1964; and CV 3.312.CC dated 7/9/1964, BCCGT 1773: *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*.

<sup>42</sup> “Sắp có về Việt Nam: những quyết định ghê gớm như để đối phó với vụ CUBA,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 3, 1964; “Thủ Tướng Nguyễn Khánh cho biết: Có nên tấn công ra Bắc không?” *Tự Do*, Mar. 7, 1964; “Đề phòng quân đội miền Nam Bắc tiến, VC Bỏ Phòng các miền duyên hải,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 16, 1964; “Nguyên tắc ‘đánh Bắc’ đã được chấp thuận,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 19, 1964; “Trả lời cuộc phỏng vấn của Tự Do, TT Nguyễn Khánh tuyên bố: Không có tổng động viên,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 20, 1964; Thái Minh, “Bắc Tiến để thông nhất VN: Tại sao không làm thật mạnh ngay là đánh đảng hoàng, đnahs đầu chiếm đó?” *Tự Do*, Mar. 23, 1964; “Đề phòng miền Nam Bắc Tiến VC Đào Hàm chống xăng và đạn dược,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 30, 1964; “Một Việt kiều tại Tân Gia Ba tình nguyện Bắc Tiến,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 9, 1964; “Huấn luyện phi công VN để bay ra Bắc,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 16, 1964; “Ngoại trưởng Dean Rusk tại Hội Nghị liên phòng: Mỹ sẽ đẩy chiến tranh lên Bắc Việt,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 16, 1964; “Thêm lý do vững mạnh để đánh ra Bắc,” *Tự Do*, May 22, 1964; “Bác sĩ Quát Tuyên bố tại Nữ Ước nếu sự sống còn bị đe dọa, VN sẽ đánh ra Bắc,” *Tự Do*, May 28, 1964; “Chuẩn tướng tư lệnh không quân VN xác nhận: Biệt kích miền Nam phá cầu Hạ Lý,” *Tự Do*, July 24, 1964.



anticommunist drive centered on grievances of “communist atrocities” and the possibility of military retribution.<sup>43</sup>

The significance of the 1964 commemorations is worth exploring because this specific commemoration illustrates not only discursive continuities from the First Republic, it was also one of the few instances in which the practice of political study was implemented during the 20-month hiatus the PSP experienced following the collapse of the Diệm administration. Study documents distributed for the 1964 commemorations utilized the Geneva narrative to generate political solidarity around the Khánh regime as well as its embracement of the “Northward March.” Particularly important were speeches by Đỗ Mậu who served as the regime’s spokesman and had deep influence over the regime’s informational policies.<sup>44</sup>

One speech, delivered on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July and assigned to be studied on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>, rearticulates fundamentals of the Geneva narrative espoused during the First Republic: “10 years ago, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1954, the communists collaborated with the colonialists to divide this dear country of ours.” Indeed, that event had led to “more than 1 million people to leave their homes, fields, graves, and ancestors to run into the South.” Although poor and impoverished, they “did not simply run into the South to find rice to eat or food to wear,” that “historical migration” was a migration “to find freedom.” That search for “freedom” came with experiences under communism which “clearly demonstrates that to live with communists was to live in death.” Under communism, there was no freedom, and “although the body still lives day to day, their spirit had died long ago.”

The war that the people of the South experience daily was caused by the communists. They “hide under the name of ‘the front to liberate the south’ to deceive the discourse...[they are] bloodthirsty, deceitful, harmful to the nation...[and] wherever there is communism, that place can never have peace.” Furthermore, despite causing war, the communists “more loudmouthedly than anyone else, chant unification and peace.” Thus, in commemoration of that day—the day that began the chaos and suffering in Vietnam—the Deputy Prime Minister called upon everyone to “revisit the atrocities of the Viet Cong, memorialize the warriors of the nation who gave their life for righteousness, the sacrifices of the military.” Together, argued the Deputy Prime Minister, the people of the South will “generate a relentless anticommunist spirit...and expose 10 years of communist atrocities to advance to final victory.”<sup>45</sup>

Other speeches, like the one delivered by Đỗ Mậu on the 11<sup>th</sup>, expands on “communist atrocities” by utilizing “the uprising in Quỳnh Lưu” (1956) and the Nhân Văn-Giải Phẫu affairs as examples of the deprivation of freedom under Communist rule and tied these Vietnamese events to the “uprising in Budapest, in Eastern Germany and Poland” as examples of how “communists had repressed through blood and iron.” Moreover, in this particular speech, the Deputy Prime Minister harkens to Vietnamese mythological history to galvanize anticommunist fervor, pointing to the heroic struggle against “Northern domination” *Bắc Thuộc* and tying the

<sup>43</sup> “Ý Chí,” *Tự Do*, July 20, 1964; “Đoàn quân Bắc Tiến SV tiếp tục ghi tên,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964; “Việc phá hoại miền Bắc: Miền Nam sẽ giúp cho các nhóm chiến sĩ tấn gia cuộc phá hoại ở Bắc Việt,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964.

<sup>44</sup> Đỗ Mậu served as the Deputy Premier of Cultural and Social Affairs and the former Minister of Information under the administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ.

<sup>45</sup> “Diễn Văn Của Phó Thủ Tướng đặc trách Văn Hóa Xã Hội đọc ngày 7-7-1964 về ngày Quốc Hận 20-7-1954” attached to CV 132-PPTT/VHXH/VP/M dated 7/8/1964, BCCGT 1773: *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*

contemporary anticommunist war to this heroic past.<sup>46</sup> Another speech, delivered on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, articulated the 3 main “grievous sins” committed by the communists: the division of the nation, serving as “henchmen for the Chinese Communists who intends to create a horrific war in South Vietnam,” and military aggression against South Vietnam and neighboring Indochinese countries.

Emotionally provocative, the speech depicted vivid scenes of communist terrorism against civilians such as “cutting their intestines and carving out their eyes.” In an official statement, the Republican pointed to how communists “secretly infiltrated arms, cadres, soldiers...[and] burned homes, even killed and kidnapped women and children, set off mines to destroy civil transportation, robbed banks...attacked hamlets, destroyed roads, temples, hospitals, schools, forcing the populace to pay taxes [to insurgents], join their army, act as spies.” The solution was to bring the war to the North, “create the foundations of democracy [in the South], exterminate the communists, the colonialists and their henchmen in hopes of bringing independence and peace to the Fatherland.”<sup>47</sup>

Similar messages were deployed under the “Discussion Movement.” Revitalizing the concept of the “Northward March” during the 1965 Day of National Resentment, study documents promoted Nguyễn Cao Kỳ’s “National Front to Liberate the North.”<sup>48</sup> Deemed a “necessary measure” to ensure ultimate victory, the Kỳ administration argued that the project to “exterminate the communists” cannot be simply isolated to the South but must be one that militarily engaged the Communist North within its own territory.<sup>49</sup> Like the year before, justification for bringing the war to the North was crafted around language familiar to the Geneva Narrative. In the formal declaration issued for that year’s commemoration, the Directorate denounced the communist’s “collaboration with Red China and the feudalist-colonialists to betray the people and had a hand in the division of the country.” Rather than bringing peace to Indochina, the Accords was a means through which communists “schemed” to overtake Vietnam and Southeast Asia. “Even before the ink had dried,” the communists began enacting their scheme of repression in the North, and infiltration, “assassination, terrorism, and kidnapping” in the South. As argued, “throughout the last 11 years, there is no poverty of evidence demonstrating that the communist regime of the North and their Chinese communist masters blatantly violated the Geneva Accords.”<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> “Lời kêu gọi của Thiếu Tướng Đỗ Mậu, Phó Thủ Tướng Đặc trách Văn Hóa Xã Hội, đọc nhân dịp Tuần Lễ Quốc Hận, trên Đài Phát Thanh Saigon, ngày 11-7-1964 hồi 19g30” attached to CV 916-PPTT/VHXH/VP dated 7/11/1964, BCCGT 1773: *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*

<sup>47</sup> “CÂU CHUYỆN DƯỚI CỜ,” BCCGT 1773: *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*.

<sup>48</sup> Originally inaugurated by Kỳ in May (“Song song với việc thành lập MTQGGPMB, Thiếu Tướng Kỳ đề nghị,” *Chính Luận*, May 1, 1965);

<sup>49</sup> “Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng miền Nam, giải phóng miền Bắc,” dated 7/20/1965, BYT 3031; CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965, PTTVNCH 29589: *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*; following the 1965 Day of National Resentment commemoration, the Kỳ administration reported a limited policy of infiltration and guerrilla warfare against North Vietnam with several teams being air dropped above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel (“South Developing Force in No. Viet Nam,” *Boston Globe*, Jul 25, 1965).

<sup>50</sup> “Tuyên Ngôn của Chính Phủ Nhân ngày 20-7-1965,” PTTVNCH 29400: *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm “ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1965*.

Drawing from similar arguments once made under the First Republic, study materials contrasted the military aggression of the communists with the “pursuit for peaceful resolution” by the South. Regurgitating a familiar mantra, “the Republic of Vietnam did not sign the Geneva Accords...however, because of our desire for peace,” the Republic accepted the Accords and worked to implement its provisions. Rather than pursuing war, the Republic had “only cared about rebuilding the South,”<sup>51</sup> providing sanctuary for refugees who “for fear of communism, left their homes in the North to migrate into the South,” and protecting their citizens from communist terrorism. Indeed, on the side of peace and freedom, the Republic was solely concerned with “self-defense, [seeking to] rebuild what is broken, and lay the foundations for the future.”

As if foreshadowing the events to come during the Second Republic, study documents in 1965 argued that, based on what had transpired as a result of the Geneva Accords, “a future treaty...must fully entail provisions to guarantee and inspect procedures of enactment.” If not, a new accord would simply be “a mass of confused papers in the hands of the communists,” once again enacting the horrors of war and violence upon the Vietnamese people.<sup>52</sup>

#### *The Paris Peace Accords and Reinterpretation of the Geneva Narrative*

Under the Second Republic, the Geneva Accords took on novel dimensions as the narrative became applied to frame the negotiations that were underway in Paris. A process of wrought controversy, the Thiệu administration sought to carefully toe the line between its effort to intensify mobilization for the war while justifying the regime’s participation in the ongoing peace talks. Faced with the contradictions evident in the regime’s diplomatic policies, one of the core tactics was to return to the ideological fundamentals of the Geneva Accords. As an ideological staple by the start of the Second Republic, South Vietnam was presented as a peace-loving country but was disastrously wrecked by war, a war caused by the Vietnamese communists in collaboration with the French colonialists. Peace, thus, was desired by the South Vietnamese, but the nation refused to yield to the communist enemy. This was, firstly, because of the countless atrocities committed by the communists, and, secondly, the deceptive nature of Vietnamese communists evidenced by their violation of the Geneva Accords. This framing was appropriated by the Thiệu administration to deal with the issue of “peace” in South Vietnam.

Thiệu’s position on peace and negotiations were first established in mandatory study of his speeches delivered in April and November of 1968. Each of these speeches were the bedrock of broader mobilization initiatives intended to reinforce the legitimacy of the regime following the catastrophe of the Tết Offensive earlier on in the year. According to one memo, these efforts were to address the “issue of spiritual and political encouragement, intended to mobilize the entirety of the people to stand up with all their might and positively contribute to the hopes of peace within independence, democracy, and progress.”<sup>53</sup> The speeches slated for mandatory study argue that the Republic’s participation in the Paris negotiations was premised, firstly, on its duty to “not ignore a single initiative to bring righteous and enduring peace,” and, secondly, “our allies, including the United States, does not have the unilateral power to decide” the fate of South

<sup>51</sup> “Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng miền Nam, giải phóng miền Bắc.”

<sup>52</sup> “Tuyên Ngôn của Chính Phủ Nhân ngày 20-7-1965.”

<sup>53</sup> 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT in PTTVNCH 29916: *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*

Vietnam. However, although much of the ideological rhetoric was based on previous justifications for opposing the Geneva narrative, the formal provisions within the Accords were embraced by the Thiệu presidency to justify specific positions that the Republic took in its role relating to the peace effort.<sup>54</sup>

For the Republic, the fundamental demand for peace was that communists “retreat all their troops from South Vietnam and reduce their activities of infiltration and terrorism.” However, the prospect of such “peace” was slim because of the deceptive nature of communist activities and promises who view “peace negotiations...is but a quackery for their war of annexation.” Thus, while the Republic would participate in negotiations, “we must always be ready, particularly during negotiations...so that we may timely cope with all the schemes that the enemy could throw at us.” The Republic had always been fighting a “defensive struggle,” and desired peace. However, peace must not mean “surrender to communism.” That peace must be “just and reasonable.”<sup>55</sup> Until that peace arrives, the Republican state must build up military and political potentials. Building on familiar caricatures of the communist enemy, study documents argued that “communists only accept peace when they realize our strength, realize that they can never win the war.” Peace, thus, could only be accomplished through victory, through strength, through martial defeat of the communist enemy. Given this premise, study documents provided rationale for the recently implemented universal draft as well as the renewed ideological efforts of the regime to revamp its informational infrastructure.<sup>56</sup> Mobilization of human resources and remaining firm on a common ideological cause would allow South Vietnam to “have enough strength to discuss peace with the communists.”<sup>57</sup>

These policies adopted by the Republican state were not only necessary for the desired peace, study documents also emphasized the political autonomy of South Vietnam in resolving the war. The Thiệu administration pointed to the provisions established in 1954 to justify its role in negotiations. Indeed, a primary point emphasized in study these study documents was that “the Republic of Vietnam must have a primary role in all negotiations.” This primacy was linked to the Geneva Accords which, as argued in one study document, “was the one with true legal and legitimate sovereignty over the South was the people and the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.” This meant that North and South Vietnam were divided into two differentiated polities, of which sovereignty in the South belonged to the Republic of Vietnam. Moreover, the Geneva Accords was utilized to justify the Republic’s position against the NLF’s participation in the Paris talks as well as Thiệu’s rejection of any form of “joint government” with the communist enemy.<sup>58</sup> As negotiations wore on, this point was emphasized to combat the Hà Nội

<sup>54</sup> “Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước phiên họp khoáng đại lưỡng viện Quốc Hội ngày 10/4/1968” attached to 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/13/1968, PTTVNCH 29916: *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*.

<sup>55</sup> “Bản Thông điệp của Tổng Thống đọc trước lưỡng Viện (2-11-1968); Thông Cáo của Chánh Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa,” PTTVNCH 29916: *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*

<sup>56</sup> “Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước phiên họp khoáng đại lưỡng viện Quốc Hội ngày 10/4/1968” attached to 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK-KH/CT dated 4/13/1968, PTTVNCH 29916: *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*.

<sup>57</sup> “Bản Hướng Dẫn Khai Thác Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Đọc Trước Phiên họp khoáng đại Lưỡng Viện Quốc Hội ngày 10-4-66,” attached to CV 36/BTT/NCKH/NHK/KH/CT dated 4/15/1968, *Tổ Chức Học Tập Thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*, PTTVNCH 29916.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid; “Bản Thông điệp của Tổng Thống đọc trước lưỡng Viện (2-11-1968); Thông Cáo của Chánh Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa,” PTTVNCH 29916: *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*

proposal that a new joint government in the South be formed, of which the NLF would have an equivalent to that of the Republican state.

For the remainder of the Republican Era, these themes were reemphasized. For example, a study document distributed in June of 1970 entitled “The Righteous Position on Peace of the Republic of Vietnam” laid out the ideological fundamentals articulated by Thiệu in 1968. Indeed, although “everyone desires peace, there are two types of peace...peace in freedom and...peace in slavery.” The Republic could only accept the former, that is one “in freedom, without communism.” Thus, given the unending “infiltration” of communist guerrillas to the South, “it is obvious for reasons of self-defense that we continue our struggle until complete victory or that the communists abandon their invasion.” In desire of peace, the Republic had accepted the Paris negotiations and had presented proposals, all of which the communists had rejected. The option for the Republic was only 2: either surrender and sentence “our children to a life of enslavement and misery within the chains communism by accepting peace at any cost” or “accept a miserable war to drive the CS out of our territory.” The Republic had chosen the latter, accepting sacrifice and austerity in hopes of realizing peace in freedom.<sup>59</sup> One study document in June condemned advocates for “joint government” as those who “live in the Nation but dream of communism”—essentially communist sympathizers or sleeper agents.<sup>60</sup> Another study document, in December, emphasized the national duty of the administrative personnel to remain “resolute,” be ideological leaders, and combat propaganda for a “joint government.”<sup>61</sup> And those distributed for the celebration of Tết in 1970 argued for the inevitability of military victory and defended increased mobilization for the war.<sup>62</sup> Study documents continued the mantra that communists were military

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<sup>59</sup> “Lập Trường Hòa Bình Công Chính Của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” attached to 2480/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 6/29/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*

<sup>60</sup> Full text, see study material entitled “Không liên hiệp với cộng sản” in NVKQG 299, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Nha Giám Đốc Văn Khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia, các đơn vị trực thuộc nha về học tập chính trị năm 1969*; directive for political study, see 2958/UBCDHTU/TU dated 7/30/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>61</sup> “TÌNH HÌNH VÀ NHIỆM VỤ TRONG GIAI ĐOẠN HIỆN TẠI” attached to 2064/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 12/26/1969, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*

<sup>62</sup> “Xuân Canh Tuất-Xuân Tắt Thăng,” attached to 364/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 1/27/1970, PTTVNCH 30455: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về Xuân Canh Tuất và Tân Hợi năm 1970*; “Thế Đứng của chúng ta trong giai đoạn hiện tại,” attached to 684/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 2/24/1970, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*.

aggressors and South Vietnam was the victim of war,<sup>63</sup> called for mobilization of national potentials for the war,<sup>64</sup> pointed to communist atrocities,<sup>65</sup> and promised ultimate victory.<sup>66</sup>

Despite these ideological efforts by the Republican state to control the discussion on peace, PSP participants expressed apparent contradictions between the anticommunist fundamentals derived from Geneva narrative and the recent shifts around issues of negotiations and peace. One key example came in July of 1969 when Thiệu announced his 6-point peace plan. Although proselytized in study sessions as “peace initiative,” the plan was harshly condemned by civil society groups and the National Assembly because one of its provisions would allow the NLF to participate in elections.<sup>67</sup> The issue was raised in one study session which questioned the viability of such an initiative. The questions raised pointed to whether the NLF would retain their affiliation if given the vote, whether such a measure could actually prevent bloodshed if “the communists recalcitrantly drag on the war,” and whether the initiative was even legal if it was rejected by the National Assembly. Unanswered in study sessions and sent to the Ministry of Information for formal responses, the Ministry of Information sought to offset misgivings by portraying the initiative as a “peace offensive” to force the communist into a political bind. The response argued that the initiative was merely propositional, the vote would only be given to NLF members if “they give up violence and weapons,” and that the initiative was intended to “test the goodwill of the communists.” As argued, if the communists accept the proposal, it would be a political victory towards peace; if not, international opinion would turn against the

<sup>63</sup> “cộng sản phá hoại hòa bình như thế nào,” attached to 2746/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 7/16/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “HIỆN TÌNH ĐẤT NƯỚC TRƯỚC CUỘC XÂM LĂNG TRẮNG TRƠN CỦA CỘNG SẢN BẮC VIỆT,” attached to 1611/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 5/29/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*.

<sup>64</sup> “THỬA THẮNG XÔNG LÊN TIÊU DIỆT HẾT BỌN CỘNG SẢN BÁN NƯỚC” attached to 2451/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 6/29/1970, PTTĐIIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*; “ĐẨY MẠNH CÁC NỖ LỰC BÌNH ĐỊNH VÀ YỂM TRỢ TIỀN TUYẾN,” 2096/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 6/4/1970, PTTVNCH 30450: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về đẩy mạnh bình định yểm trợ tiền tuyến tự phòng có hậu phương bền vững tự túc tự quân và tự chế năm 1970*; ““Làm Gì Để Cứu Nguy Tô Quốc,” attached to 3093/BTT/TV/CTTL/NCBT/BT dated 5/25/1972, PTTVNCH 31331: *Tài liệu học tập v/v thực thi chính sách tiết kiệm, đẩy mạnh sản xuất, tận diệt tham nhũng, củng cố chế độ năm 1971-1974*; “TRẬN CHIẾN QUYẾT ĐỊNH,” 2194/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 7/21/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến, hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*

<sup>65</sup> “Làm Thế Nào để thực hiện được một nền hòa bình công chính và tương cứu?” attached to 2593/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 7/8/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “Cộng Sản Phản Bội Dân Chúng Như Thế Nào?” attached to 4479/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 11/20/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “Tại Sao Ta Phải Chống Cộng Đến Kỳ Cùng,” attached to 4384/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 11/13/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*; “TẠI SAO CHÚNG TA CHỦ TRƯỞNG 4 KHÔNG?” attached to 2601/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 8/18/1971, BYT 3031: *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*; “Vấn Đề Tổ chức tự xưng là chánh phủ cách mạng lâm thời” dated Mar. 1974, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tổ cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*; “Chiến dịch toàn dân tích cực tranh đấu cho hòa bình dân tộc,” attached to 91/TT/PTH/BC dated 9/16/1974, PTTVNCH 31331: *Tài liệu học tập v/v thực thi chính sách tiết kiệm, đẩy mạnh sản xuất, tận diệt tham nhũng, củng cố chế độ năm 1971-1974*.

<sup>66</sup> “Thế Tật Thẳng của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa,” 2949/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 8/3/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*

<sup>67</sup> Đoàn Thêm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1969*, p. 228, 230, 235; CV 0723-PTT/TTK/VP dated 7/25/1969, PTTVNCH 30271: *Báo cáo của các Phủ, Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập chính trị năm 1969*; “báo cáo hàng tháng về công tác học tập (Tháng 8/69) Đơn Vị 3,” PTTVNCH 30271: *Báo cáo của các Phủ, Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập chính trị năm 1969*

communists and acknowledge that the Republic “love peace, [and] the communists the aggressors.”<sup>68</sup> In another example, a participant, in November, questioned that if “the communists continue to terrorize, create a situation of death and misery for the South...why do we not advance our troops to the North in retribution in hopes of quickly concluding this war?” Indeed, harkening to the vision of the “Northward March,” the question also built on the assumption that all the misery of war was a creation of the communists and, thus, contradicted the Paris talks of which the Republic was a party. The Ministry of Information pointed to the Republic’s commitment to peace and argued that not directly attacking the North was not “due to our lack of military capabilities, but because we want to avoid a situation of brotherly loss....We only fight to defend.”<sup>69</sup>

These issues would remain consistent even as the Paris negotiations were coming to a close. A question raised amongst in late 1972 pointed to the fact that “we did not accept and did not sign the Geneva Accords, then why does the [Republic]...demand that the issue of VN be resolved in accordance to this accords and use that as a platform to demand that the communists adhere to?” The response was that although the Republic does not accept the Geneva Accords, “we accept the reality that was produced from that accord, in hopes of avoiding bloodshed with North Vietnam.” The Geneva Accords, as argued, presented the “best means” to end the war “that the [communists] had brought about for so many years.” While accepting the provision that divided the north and south into two separate sovereign territories, the Republic rejected any form of joint government with the communist guerrillas.<sup>70</sup>

While the government’s position on peace would remain consistent for the remainder of the Republic, political study materials began emphasizing communist duplicity and the inevitability of communist “violation” to any signed treaties towards the end of 1972. This shift in emphasis was a response to the fact that Washington and Hà Nội were reaching a consensus on a deal. How the Paris Peace Accords would be framed in South Vietnam drew inspirations from the dominant Geneva narrative that had informed Republican policies for almost two decades. An earlier case in late 1970 had made this apparent.

Some 2 years before the Paris Peace Accords were actually signed, an agreement for a ceasefire was on the negotiation tables and was seriously discussed by both South Vietnamese and American parties. While the truce was never implemented, study documents for the month of December emphasized guardedness around a possible ceasefire. Entitled “Be wary of the political warfare scheme of the communists before, during, and after the ceasefire,” the study document drew directly on the experiences surrounding the 1954 Geneva signings to articulate why the Republican state must take certain measures such as increased counter-propaganda

<sup>68</sup> CV 3448/BTT/UBCĐHT/TU dated 9/2/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>69</sup> “báo cáo hàng tháng về công tác học tập (tháng 11 năm 1969)” dated 11/3/1969, PTTVNCH 30271: *Báo cáo của các Phủ, Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập chính trị năm 1969*.

<sup>70</sup> “Giải đáp các thắc mắc về hòa bình-ngừng bắn” attached to CV 179/TCCTCT/CCH/GDCT dated 1/5/1973, PTTVNCH 31120: *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin hướng dẫn học tập về thông điệp của Tổng Thống, giải đáp thắc mắc hòa bình và ngừng bắn, sự thất bại của công án, thể thắng của chúng ta và thực thi kế hoạch tết đơn vị năm 1973*; For a litany of questions related to viability of ceasefire, issues of self-determination, and contradictions between the Geneva Accords and the Paris Agreement, see “Giải đáp thắc mắc dành cho SVSQ tham gia Chiến Dịch TT/CTCT” attached to CV 179/TCCTCT/CCH/GDCT dated 1/5/1973, PTTVNCH 31120: *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin hướng dẫn học tập về thông điệp của Tổng Thống, giải đáp thắc mắc hòa bình và ngừng bắn, sự thất bại của công án, thể thắng của chúng ta và thực thi kế hoạch tết đơn vị năm 1973*.

effort, “cleansing” criminal elements from society, and crackdown on peace-organizations that were seen as “the infrastructure” of the NLF. According to study documents, after the enactment of any ceasefire, the communists would shift its strategy from military to political warfare. Indeed, “during this period, the communists would no longer use weapons to terrorize the population, but they have new schemes to eliminate anticommunist nationalists.” The communists will, on the one hand, use force to coerce the population and, on the other hand, manipulate the press to control public discussions. The former meant exploiting personal vengeance and utilizing gangsters and criminal elements to “cleanse” political enemies and the latter meant exploiting press freedom in the South to condemn anticommunist leaders while propagating that “it is only the communists who are truly fighting for the nation and people.” These activities are intended to infiltrate and establish a shadow infrastructure within the legitimate domains of the administration and corrupt the cadres of the state. As argued, a holistic informational and monitoring effort must be implemented nationwide to combat these “schemes” to infiltrate the Republican state.<sup>71</sup>

On October 24, 1972, Thiệu delivered a national speech as Washington and Hà Nội neared a deal at the Paris negotiations. Similar to how the regime responded to the possibility of a ceasefire two years prior, Thiệu pointed to the history of communist duplicity and the inevitability of treaty violation. While much of the speech was dedicated to attacking the proposition of a “joint government” in South Vietnam, the speech pointed to the inevitability of a ceasefire and the caution that must be taken when such a ceasefire was enacted. That ceasefire, as argued, is not a victory of the communists, but rather a victory of the Republic who had military forced the communists to sue for peace. Communists, through Thiệu’s speech, were “hooligans” *lưu manh* and thugs who consistently attempted to deceive the population through “harmonious” *hòa dịu* words and promises. The communists, said the President, “only are strong and have hope in victory through their mouths.” He predicted that during the ceasefire, communists would increase their propagandistic efforts and politically attack anticommunist ideals and the Republican state. Thus, measures had been taken to ensure that “all chaotic and insurgent schemes of the communists be immediately squeezed to death.” These measures and precautions were necessary because of the “situation in 1954...[which demonstrated] the deceptive and cunning activities of the communists.” Those who still remember that era “must understand the devilishness of the communist and must firmly deal with them.” The President called for a nationwide anticommunist effort to combat propaganda of divisiveness, activities of terrorism and coercion, and attempts to infiltrate the administration. For Thiệu, this 1972 moment was that which would determine whether South Vietnam would retain its “Freedom and Democracy” or fall prey to a communist takeover.<sup>72</sup>

Thiệu’s speech set the political tone for subsequent study materials. Organized by the General Information Program, the political study effort on the ceasefire was a nationwide effort which entailed highly structured mass gathering of state agents, soldiers, and the populace

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<sup>71</sup> “HÃY CẢNH GIÁC CÁC THỦ ĐOẠN ĐẤU TRANH CHÍNH TRỊ CỦA CỘNG SẢN TRƯỚC, TRONG VÀ SAU CUỘC NGỪNG BẮN” attached to 4605/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 12/2/1970, PTTVNCH 32656: *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*.

<sup>72</sup> “Bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa với đồng bào các giới trên hệ thống truyền thanh và truyền hình ngày 24-10-1972” attached to CV 3251/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 10/26/1972, PTTVNCH 30917: *Tài liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về thông điệp và các bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống năm 1972*;



alike.<sup>73</sup> Turned into a state campaign, these study sessions were intended to prevent the possibility of a communist-led insurgency during the ceasefire.<sup>74</sup> In preparation, the Republican state established an evacuation plan alongside counter-propaganda and mass mobilization efforts targeted at areas undergoing heavy fighting. Political study sessions would be utilized to not only explain the ceasefire but would become organized rallies to condemn communism through visuals, media, and mobilizing “those with loved ones who were killed by communists” to speak out. These sessions were to be conducted daily, be uniformed and enacted at the same time across a province, anticommunist slogans must be displayed, and all social gatherings must erect the Republican flag, including those activities conducted by civilians. As directed, these activities must penetrate civil defense forces, rural youth organizations, major religions, and all social organizations.<sup>75</sup> General Information presentation troupes composed of representatives from state ministries would be sent to various political religious organizations to propagate for the regime.<sup>76</sup>

Study documents re-emphasized that South Vietnam had “always loved peace” and thus had entered negotiations with the enemy in hopes of attaining peace. Based on provisions established in the 1954 Geneva Accords, study documents argued that “the two regions of North and South Vietnam [were] to live separately with 2 different regimes, to be seen as 2 independent nations, and each cannot interfere with the domestic politics of the other.” Given this condition, the Republic had entered negotiations with North Vietnam as an independent party and that the NLF must be seen as a domestic affair of South Vietnam and must not have the interference of the North.<sup>77</sup> Republican goodwill at the negotiations table, however, was met with “recalcitrance intended to colonize the South...[and experiences] demonstrate that the communists always use force with hopes of dyeing red this South Vietnam.” Regurgitating Thiệu’s point, study documents argue that the ceasefire was not a victory for the communists, but rather evidence of the communist’s military weakness who had been forced to sue for peace. Although with the upper hand, the Republic cannot diminish its guardedness given the history of communist duplicity.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Telegrams *công điện* reporting on sessions: Kiến Tường, 450 participants on 11/20: Công điện đến PTT số 10596 ngày 25 tháng 11 năm 1972 and Phú Bôn: Công văn đến PTT số 10520 ngày 22/11/1972; 52 people with member of family with communists on 11/23 in công văn đến PTT số 10535 ngày 23/11/1972)—Phú Bôn studied “Hòa bình và Ngừng bắn cho 138 on 11/26 (717/PB/VP dated 11/27/72), PTTVNCH 18110: *Tập tài liệu của PThT, các Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập Hiệp Định ngừng bắn năm 1972-1973.*

<sup>74</sup> CV 3338/PThT/HĐPT/KH dated 11/2/1972, PTTVNCH 18110: *Tập tài liệu của PThT, các Bộ, tỉnh v/v học tập Hiệp Định ngừng bắn năm 1972-1973; “Nhiệm vụ và công tác của Cán Bộ Phát Triển Nông Thôn khi có ngừng bắn,”* attached to CV 029/PTNT/5/SVVT/M dated 11/04/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972;* <sup>75</sup> “Nhiệm vụ và công tác của CB/PTNT khi có ngừng bắn,” attached to CV 029/PTNT/5/SVVT/M dated 11/4/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972.*

<sup>76</sup> CV 3704/BTT/UBTTĐC/TƯ dated 12/14/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*

<sup>77</sup> “Vấn Đề Hòa Bình và Ngừng Bắn” attached to CV 3277/BTT/UBTTĐC/TƯ dated 10/31/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972.*

<sup>78</sup> “Vấn Đề Hòa Bình và Ngừng Bắn” attached to CV 3277/BTT/UBTTĐC/TƯ dated 10/31/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972.*

The “origins” of the war in the South, after all, “derived from the avarice of the North Vietnamese communists to expand the territory and foreign ideology of communism.” This “avarice” was something held by the communists “immediately since the Geneva agreement of 1954.”<sup>79</sup> Documents went into detail about the form of “leopard skin ceasefire” *ngừng bắn da beo* and laid out measures that should be taken before, during, and after the ceasefire to combat the possibility of communist violation. Repeating the classic allegation of communist duplicity, one document argues “to the communist, ceasefire under any form is just a beginning phase to prepare for a legal political solution that would bring forth the colonization of the South.” The communists, thus, would utilize political warfare strategies by attacking agents of the state, delegitimize the policies of the Republic, coercion of the populace, and mass mobilization built on personal vengeance. To tackle these schemes, state agents are instructed to firmly continue their duties, remain wary of any communist activities, provide security for the populace, and participate fully in counterpropaganda and counter-mobilization against communism.

Once the Paris Agreement had been signed, another campaign was waged under Hoàng Đức Nhã to recapture the peace narrative by depicting the Republic as the winner in the peace deal. As argued, the Paris Agreement was an achievement brought about “by the heroic spirit of struggle of the Republican military which had defeated the communist invaders and forced them to sign.” However, the study document quickly returned to issues of communist violation as sporadic fighting once again erupted. Once glorified as a Republican success, the Paris Accords quickly became a symbol of communist duplicity and aggression in violating ceasefire provisions. Subsequent study materials covered how communists negotiate and their strategies of deception,<sup>80</sup> reemphasized the communist’s intent to “colonize” South Vietnam and the Republic’s good will in properly enacting provisions,<sup>81</sup> described measures undertaken by communist forces to obstruct international monitoring during the ceasefire,<sup>82</sup> attacked the Provisional Government of South Vietnam as an illegitimate entity and thus had no bargaining power,<sup>83</sup> and listed the various cases of guerrilla violence movement of troops which violates the signed accords.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>79</sup> “sự toan tính sai lầm của Cộng Sản Bắc Việt khi công bố bản dự thảo thỏa hiệp” attached to 7666/BTT/TV/CTTL/NCBT dated 12/6/1972, PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*

<sup>80</sup> “Những bài học hòa đàm với cộng sản” attached to CV 4627/PThT/STTL dated 10/22/1973, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*; “nhận định của phái đoàn VNCH tham dự hội nghị La Celle Saint Cloud về đề nghị 6 điểm ngày 22.03.74 của phía cộng sản” received in CV 1477 dated 3/28/1974 by Phủ Thủ Tướng, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*

<sup>81</sup> “Bản tin Hiệp Định Ba Lê” dated 4/15/1974, attached to CV 24444/DVCH/VP dated 9/10/1974, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> “Vấn Đề Tố chức tự xưng là chánh phủ cách mạng lâm thời” dated March 1974, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*

<sup>84</sup> “Tuyên cáo của Chánh Phủ VNCH về việc phía Cộng Sản Phá Hoại Hiệp Định Ba Lê 27.01.1973” attached to CV 5523/DVCH/TTQN/KH dated 11/28/1974, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*; “Cộng Sản phá hoại và chối bỏ Hiệp Định Ba Lê” attached to CV 4797/DVCH/TTQN/KH dated 11/2/1974, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập,*

As one of the final study documents distributed, “Summarizing 2 years following the Paris signings” repeated the argument that a ceasefire was signed with the Republic having the upper hand. However, given this weakness, the communists schemed to “intentionally destroy the Paris Accords” while the Republic of Vietnam, with its “goodwill,” had “strictly enforced” the provisions. Tracing “violations” to the day right after the Accords were signed, the document provided a litany of cases including attacks on schools, temples, trains, and military outposts in the South. It pointed to the continued infiltration of troops and war materiel through Cambodia and Laos and alleged that communist activities were directed at roads and infrastructures necessary for international oversight of the ceasefire. As for the Republic of Vietnam, the document argued that the Republican state “sincerely welcomed” the Accords on the grounds that it promised to bring about peace. All military troops under Republican command had ceased fighting and the Republic had provided security and food for communist troops retreating to the north, ensured that international inspectors were well provided for, and had faithfully negotiated prisoner exchanges. All that the Republic had done, the document argued, “obviously....are intended to protect the homeland and in hopes of a just peace that aligned to the will of the people.” It was on that promise of such “peace” that the anticommunist struggle must continue, regardless of the sacrifices that the Republic must take.<sup>85</sup>

### *Conclusion*

As argued in the Introduction of Part II, Republican anticommunism was a persistent discourse throughout the Republican era. It was reshaped and remolded to frame events and historical developments experienced in the South. The developments within the Geneva Narrative demonstrate this proposition clearly. Instituted in 1955, the ideas, terminologies, and assumptions pertaining to the narrative were built upon and corroborated through new “evidence” and fresh perspectives over the course of Republican history. Republican anticommunism as a discourse was not “ready-made” at the point of inception, nor did it remain consistent throughout its lifetime. The adamant “rejection” of the Geneva Accords—so dominant in those early years—transformed into a near embracing of it in the 1959 “White Papers.” Discourse, after all, is a process and everchanging. Continued were the fundamental depiction of the Geneva Accords as a scheme between colonialist France and the Vietnamese communists to divide the nation. Throughout the Republic, this depiction became so routinized that it served as an ideological mantra.<sup>86</sup>

As politics transformed and war reemerged in South Vietnam, the discussion on the Accords shifted to the ways in which that “scheme” between communists and French colonialists had set the stage for military infiltration and aggression. During the Interregnum, the theme of

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*chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*; “Bản tin Hiệp Định Ba Lê” dated 4/15/1974, attached to CV 24444/DVCH/VP dated 9/10/1974, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*

<sup>85</sup> “Tổng Kết Hai Năm Ký Kết Hiệp Định Ba Lê (27.1.1973-27.1.1975),” 20/DVCH/VP/M dated 1/22/1975, PTTVNCH 31568: *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*.

<sup>86</sup> For example, in celebration of 1961’s Double Seven Day, the journal *Gió Nam* introduced the Geneva Accords as “a scheme to divide the country” in order to depict the political conditions of the country prior to the return of Ngô Đình Diệm to Vietnam. The “scheme” was mentioned only in passing as an ideological catchphrase. The brunt of the article’s content was on the “achievements” of Diệm.

military aggression grew prominent as regimes sought to mobilize political support by promising a “Northward March” in retribution. The corpus of concepts and ideas developed around the South Vietnamese rejection of the Geneva Accords was once again revitalized during the Second Republic as the Thiệu Presidency sought to navigate the perilous high wire of diplomatic and domestic politics. While participating in the Paris Peace Conference, caricatures of the communist enemy and assumptions of their deception continued to be regularly deployed, taught, and instituted. Transformed into accepted wisdom garnered from “experiences” with the communists, political and ideological notions germane to the Geneva Narrative shaped not only how the Thiệu administration approached the topic of peace, but also the Republican policies enacted immediately prior and after the signing of the Accords in Paris.

Evidently, the transformations documented in the Geneva Accords was a product of changing political conditions of the Republican era and the unique perspective that Republican state-builders took in response to those developments. New developments did not make old ideas obsolete. Rather, old ideas were layered onto new applications and interpretations, building a sense of ideological continuity that connects the various—even antagonistic—regimes. The PSP played no small part in constructing this continuity as pedagogical texts and themes developed during the First Republic were redeveloped and repurposed for the challenges facing subsequent regimes. As a core narrative of Republican anticommunism, the Geneva Narrative, as taught through the PSP, did more than provide for actors in Republic the ideological schemas to interpret and respond to changing circumstances, it also mythologized the story of Republican origins, laid bare (often in emotionally-laden language) the horrors and loss of war, and glorified the Republican pursuit of “peace” and “freedom.” These dimensions of the narrative justified the necessity of an anticommunist Republic and provided the ideational components through which South Vietnamese actors articulated their values, their purpose, and their collectivity as a nation

CHAPTER 4: ANTI-NEUTRALISM AND MAKING THOUGHTS “RESOLUTE”

Neutrality is perhaps one of the more controversial issues of the Vietnam War. In part a consequence of anti-war movements (both in South Vietnam and abroad) that emerged following the introduction of American combat units into Vietnam, the discursive history of the concept was interwoven with core questions of peace, war, and reconciliation. On the left, scholars like George Kahin and Robert Topmiller have argued that neutralist sentiments were organic expressions of Vietnamese self-determination and refusal to abide to American foreign policy. On the right, authors had demonized neutralists and advocates of peace for politically diluting both South Vietnamese and American GI's will to fight, ultimately resulting in the loss of the war. With the communist victory in 1975, the post-war historiography centered on matters relating to the morality, ethics, and practicality of American involvement in the conflict, spelling out the inevitability of American defeat due to its unconscientious imposition of death and destruction of a Third World people who were unwilling dragged into a conflict between Cold War superpowers. Neutrality and peace, in consequence, articulated what was historically and morally correct and such framing was reinforced by the political impulse of the 1960s antiwar movement, as well as the ascension of Buddhist peace advocates on the world stage (e.g., Thích Nhất Hạnh, Thích Trí Quang).

Largely concealed by this overriding concern with America's role in Vietnam is the anti-neutrality that was perpetually taught, adamantly expressed, and had historically informed the policies of the Vietnamese Republic. Far from an ideology imposed by orchestrators of American foreign policy, anti-neutrality was organic to South Vietnam and catered less to American perspectives on peace and war than articulated core South Vietnamese concerns regarding their political autonomy and survival of their nation. Indeed, in South Vietnamese political lexicon, it was not neutrality that was morally justified, but rather anti-neutrality. Historically conjoined to the narrative on the Geneva Accords, anti-neutrality finds its origins in the CDTC of the First Republic, and, throughout the Republican era, neutrality was adamantly condemned. This condemnation equated neutrality with a communist scheme to weaken the political forces of Vietnamese nationalism and anticommunism.

However, the anti-neutralist narrative of the Republic encompassed more than just a rejection of neutrality on diplomatic grounds. Rather, neutrality was conceptualized as an erroneous *individualized* position resulting from fear, misunderstanding, or conspiracy. Those who held neutralist beliefs must be convinced to "make resolute their thoughts" and essentially "choose a side." "Neutrality"—depicted as a wavering middle-of-the-road political attitude—is juxtaposed to "resoluteness" defined as an absolute loyalty to the ideals of the Republican nation-state. In such argumentation, "resoluteness" against communism was morally and politically justified. It was the communists who had collaborated with the French to divide the homeland, who had initiated a guerrilla war resulting in the death countless lives, who were notoriously deceptive and conniving, and whose acumen was the ability to manipulate and exploit the political and psychological weakness of anticommunist nationalist. "Resoluteness of thought," thus, was a weapon. It was a safeguard against the enemy's psychological war.

Beginning with the immediate years after the Second World War, the concept of "neutrality" had emerged as a diplomatic position on the part of many decolonizing states to refuse alignment with either the Soviet Union or the United States during the Cold War. The Bandung Conference in April of 1955 formalized the policy of neutrality for some 29 countries who became a part of a growing "Non-Aligned Movement." This movement sought to avoid political and military association with the major Cold War powers and were largely composed of

decolonizing Asian and African states. These countries sought economic assistance from both the Soviet Union and the United States though refrained from entering into military alliances with either powers. Meetings of the “Nonaligned” countries occurred every three years and at its height encompassed some 100 states. These countries banded together for reasons of territorial integrity, wariness of new forms of economic dependency, and, but for most, sought to maintain their newly won national independence.<sup>1</sup>

While many in the decolonizing world set their course to join the Non-Aligned Movement, South Vietnam took an alternative route. In the same year as the Bandung Conference, Trần Chánh Thành initiated the CDTC and inaugurated the first sessions of the PSP. Among those first five initial documents required for study was one entitled “Make Thoughts Resolute.”<sup>2</sup> As a foundational document that would establish the fundamentals of anti-neutralism during the First Republic, it is worth dwelling into details.

### *“Resoluteness” of Thought*

A text of political philosophy, “Make Thoughts Resolute” begins by outlining the required necessities of making an anticommunist nation. As argued, “the present period requires us to be firm in our actions, be resolute in anticommunism, as well as rejecting colonialism, to ensure the survivability of the people and true independence for the country.” To reinforce the South’s “‘anticommunist’ ranks” and ensure ideological resoluteness, the issue of “neutralism” must be addressed. According to the piece, although many were aware of the dangers of communism, there were still some “within our ranks...[who still] have not recognized the issue, thus remain neutral.” Neutralism, in the South Vietnamese definition, meant “not opposing communism as well as not opposing the nation, in that they refuse to engage in an ideological war.” Neutralists were divided into three categories: 1) those who have little experience with communists and so are thus mistaken about the communist danger, 2) those who do have experience but are afraid of repercussion, and 3) those who are disappointed with the southern government because they were removed their positions after colonialism. These neutralists “hide from collective responsibility to worry only about themselves.” They do not appreciate the magnitude of the situation and view the issues of the nation through the lens of a foreigner. In addition to these three categories of neutralists, there were also those who “hide behind neutralism to easily operate for the enemy.”<sup>3</sup>

While the South Vietnamese conception of neutralism was largely utilized to identify *individuals*, historical experiences of different countries were utilized to demonstrate the errors of the position. Section III of “Make Thoughts Resolute” dealt with the question “In reality, can one be neutralist?” Evidently, the answer was no. Using the First and Second World War, the piece argues that despite initially claiming “neutrality” during these wars, countries like Belgium were forced into the conflict. As argued, “whether they want to or not, when a country is affected by war, for the good of its people, that country must be resolute in their political standpoint.”<sup>4</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Neutralism. (2018). *Britannica Online Academic Edition*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> CV Số 1578/BTT/VP dated 8.13.1955 in Folder No. 29164, PTTVNCH, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*.

<sup>3</sup> “Đứt Khóat Tư Tưởng” in Folder No. 29164, PTTVNCH, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*.

<sup>4</sup> “dầu muốn dầu không một khi nằm trong ảnh hưởng chiến tranh, vì quyền lợi của dân tộc, mọi quốc gia đều phải có một lập trường dứt khoát.” Ibid.

the present period, the world was ideologically divided into two blocs, though there is a group of countries which saw themselves as part of a third bloc—the Neutralists. According to the text, neutralist countries, in fact, were not truly neutralist at all. Rather, it is simply a slogan utilized to better position a country on the international stage. The case of India is utilized as an example. Despite claiming neutralism, India receives economic aid from the United States and has anticommunist domestic policies.<sup>5</sup>

Neutralism, propagated by the Soviet Union, was also a scheme of international communism to deplete the availability of support for the Free World. According to the text, the “neutralization” of India and Yugoslavia was due to the activities of the Soviet Union. These countries posed threats if they were to align themselves with the West. The Soviet Union supported the neutralization of Yugoslavia and India while not supporting the neutralization of Poland, Lithuania, or Latvia—countries that the United States designated for neutral status. Neutralism, by Soviet design, was a protracted “psychological strategy” to “lull countries” from the dangers of communism to “swallow a number of other countries more easily.”<sup>6</sup>

Like the Soviet Union, the Vietnamese communists are using the same “psychological strategy” by advocating neutralism to divide the anticommunists of the South. By advocating neutralism, individuals may not be directly supporting the enemy, but they will not be supporting the southern government either. Actual neutrality, however, is an impossibility. The division of the country has placed either side of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel into an ideological camp. To be a part of one side would be to serve that side and oppose the other. Neutralism, in essence, is a fallacious philosophy that refuses to acknowledge the political realities of the country.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in acknowledgement of these political realities, the text provides new categorization that identifies the “we,” “our allies,” and “our enemies.” The “we” comprises of “all individuals who are willing to fight for true independence of the country, for the true happiness of the people.” These individuals entail “all the people of Vietnam who are ‘oppose communism,’ including those live in the VC dominated area.” “Our allies” were those outside of the country who “support our true independence” like Britain, France, and America as well as Taiwan, the Philippines, and Thailand. “Our enemies” are those who rejects “our true independence”—the communists, the colonialists, the feudalists and “their lackeys.”<sup>8</sup>

To arrive at this “resoluteness,” the piece demands that individuals of the nation must “vengefully hate all neutralist thoughts.”<sup>9</sup> Neutralism, when it came to the contemporary conditions of the country, is a “reactionary” ideology and those who held on to neutralism must be “completely exterminated.” To be part of the South, one must not only be anticommunist, but also anti-neutralist. After all, “to receive the rights of a citizen, one must stand within the rank of the nation and fight, one does not have the right to be neutral.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “chấn hạn như Ấn Độ, 1 nước điển hình của khối chủ trương trung lập hiện nay vẫn tiếp tục nhận viện trợ Mỹ và vẫn không bao giờ dung túng cho cộng sản sống chung trên đất Ấn, như vậy thì dù thấy Ấn độ đứng về phe bên nào rồi.” Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “Chính Sách của Nga sô là ru ngủ một số nước vì chiến thuật giai đoạn, để nuốt 1 số nước khác cho dễ dàng hơn....Nhắm về nước nhà ta thấy Việt Cộng cũng đang có ý áp dụng một chiến thuật tư tưởng.” Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Section “Phân biệt: Ta—Bạn—Thù.” Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> “Chúng ta phải dứt khoát lập trường, căm thù mọi tư tưởng trung lập.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



This rigid conception of Republican citizenry was particularly emphasized for civil servants. A speech delivered by Ngô Đình Diệm on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August to civil servants of the administration juxtaposed “resoluteness” with “neutrality” and identified “resoluteness” with political and ideological loyalty. While the Prime Minister called upon his citizens to have responsibility in “saving and developing the nation” and not be disinterested in the political situation of the world, the civil servants had particular responsibilities as “cadres” of the government to carry out its ideals. Civil servants, according to Diệm, were chosen by the government and received privileges that were unavailable to ordinary citizens. Civil servants then must be loyal to the government who proffered them these privileges and prove themselves worthy.<sup>11</sup>

Loyalty, here, did not simply mean political loyalty, but also ideological loyalty. Indeed, the “civil servant cannot have a neutralist attitude...because to be neutralist, middle-of-the-road, is to benefit the enemies of the people and the nation.” They must have a “resolute attitude, resolutely stand in the ranks of the nation” and place all their energies into accomplishing the ideals of the state. To be “resolute,” as opposed to being neutralist, meant being on the “side” of the state in matters of communism, feudalism, and colonialism. It is a matter of absolute loyalty to one side—the correct side being that of the “nation.”<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the CDTC, the concept of “resoluteness” was a foundational element in assigned materials and discussions of political study. As argued in one political study document, political study would only have its intended effect if students are “resolute” in their thoughts and subsequently their actions. This meant adopting a particular attitude towards “communist denunciation” and political study must be adopted. That attitude, as emphasized time and again, was to appreciate these forms of ideological activities were paramount to the success of the nation.<sup>13</sup>

### *Lập Trường [Standpoint]*

Associated to the concept of “resoluteness” was that of *lập trường*, loosely translated to “standpoint.” This term was later commonly used to mean ideological positionality and an unwavering commitment to that position. It meant taking a stand on a side of an issue and this position must be “firm,” demonstrated through defending that position in both words and actions. During the CDTC, *lập trường* did not simply mean having a standpoint regarding communism, but rather also a “standpoint of struggle” *lập trường tranh đấu* to mean firmness in defending one’s ideological position. One derivative of the original study document argues that “to not have a standpoint of struggle would be disastrous, not unlike a ship sailing the open seas without a steering wheel, without knowledge of what the future or tomorrow have in store, placing fate to where waves and winds will push you and undoubtedly the ship will sink.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ Nói Chuyện Với các Công Chức tại Dinh Độc Lập ngày 8-8-55” in Folder No. 29164, Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> “Ý Nghĩa Việc Học Tập Tổ Cộng và Thái Độ Học Tập,” in Folder No. 52, PTUDCTN, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tổ Cộng năm 1955*

<sup>14</sup> “nếu không có một lập trường tranh đấu thì thật tai hại, không khác con thuyền giữa biển khơi mà không có bánh lái, không biết tương lai ngày mai sẽ ra sao, phó mặc cho biển chuyển song gió đưa đẩy mà chắc chắn sẽ bị chìm đắm” (“Xác Định Lập Trường, Dứt Khoát Tư Tưởng,” in Folder No. 52, PTUDCTN, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tổ Cộng năm 1955*).

The document “Determine your standpoint, make resolute your thoughts,” an adaption of the original utilized in PSP sessions conducted by the General Office of Migration from 1955-1957, utilizes the concept of *lập trường* to redefine Neutralism as a wavering attitude or the lack of a “firm” ideological standpoint. The piece begins with a demonstration of the difference between the politics before and after the ascension of Ngô Đình Diệm. As depicted, those belonging to the nation (i.e., anticommunists) had not considered the issue of “determining our standpoint” because of the lack of such a unified and clear “standpoint” prior to the return of Diệm to Vietnam. Ngô Đình Diệm established a clear “standpoint of struggle” that differentiate the “we,” “our allies” and “our enemies.” To not appreciate this differentiation and remain “neutral” would be a “grievous sin” against the nation and the people. Indeed, it was mandatory for every citizen of the south to “participate in opposing communism” because to not oppose meant allowing the communists to win, condemning the entirety of Vietnam to communist domination. Expected was an unyielding commitment to this “standpoint,” enduring and consistent whether the times proved hard or beneficial. Ultimately, an unyielding “standpoint” against communism—thus the rejection of neutralism—was both a personal and national responsibility of every citizen.<sup>15</sup>

“Resoluteness”—the firmness of ideological standpoint—must be translated into actions. Individual potentials, skills, and aptitude must be directed towards actualizing the ideals of the state. Indeed, much of the discourse on anti-neutralism was a mobilizing call for participation in the CDTC. However, “resoluteness” also came to mean being “conscious” and “aware” of the deceptions and schemes of the enemy, “always revolutionizing the self” and “wary of those who continue to hold a wavering attitude: ‘eating the rice of the nation but praising the communists.’”<sup>16</sup> This was especially true for the governmental staff. According to Diệm in his speech to civil servants in August of 1955, the present period is marked by the infiltration of communist agents into “our ranks of government and society to disrupt the national polity.” Required was that civil servants engage in *phòng gian bảo mật* (PGBM), literally translated to “safeguard against traitors, protection of secrets.”<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the First Republic, PGBM—a staple topic of political study—was viewed as a necessary activity for all administrative organs. It basically entails detecting, taking precautions, and guarding against infiltration of governmental bodies by criminal elements and the safeguarding of classified reports and documents. While the concept of the PGBM was not necessarily new, in 1955, the responsibility of protecting the integrity of the governmental organ was outsourced to each and every administrative employee. “Resoluteness” of thoughts and

<sup>15</sup> “Bất kỳ lúc nào, ở đâu, hoàn cảnh thuận lợi hay khó khăn, chúng ta cũng phải thể hiện lập trường, tư tưởng của chúng ta trong mọi công tác....Nếu mọi người dân đều thống nhất ý chí, thống nhất hành động thì lực lượng toàn dân là bảo đảm chắc chắn cho cách mạng thành công, diệt Cộng thắng lợi.” Further, “Đối với Tổ Quốc, đối với dân tộc, thái độ lừng chùng là một tội nặng. Đối với cá nhân, thái độ lừng chùng càng tai hại rõ rệt. Lừng chùng chỉ có nghĩa là tự diệt mình, nếu mình khoogn tham gia chống cộng, để cộng sản thắng thì thử hỏi ban than mình có thoát khỏi ách độc tài cộng sản, gong cùm, đàn áp dã man của chúng không....Bánh xe lịch sử quay rất nhanh, và phong trào cách mạng đang lên cao, nó sẽ gạt lại những phần tử ương hèn ý lại.” Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> “ăn cơm quốc gia mà ca tụng cộng sản” was, by 1961, modified into the catchier “ăn cơm quốc gia mà thờ ma cộng sản.” Later use noted in “Biên Bản ba buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng tại Phòng Hội Cảnh Sát cuộc Quận 5 những ngày 8, 9, 10 tháng 11 năm 1961 lúc 15g30” in Folder No. 20532, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11, 12. 1961.*

<sup>17</sup> “Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ Nói Chuyện Với các Công Chức tại Dinh Độc Lập ngày 8-8-55” in Folder No. 29164, Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955.*

loyalty was a prerequisite for properly safeguarding the organ. Civil servants were required to “self-criticize” their own work habits and carefully preserve important documents. Their loyalty to the state meant ensuring that classified information does not enter the wrong hands. The civil servant must always be on guard and rid themselves of “ideas of dependence” *tư tưởng ỷ lại*. This ultimately means that the civil servants must not rely on others to ensure the protection of sensitive information but must take that responsibility upon himself. Without initiative, the document claims, the enemy could easily disrupt the operations of the state and divide the governmental body.<sup>18</sup>

### *Anti-Neutrality in Development and Diplomacy*

While Republican position on neutrality during the CDTC took on an *individualized* notion of the concept, study materials following the 1958 reconfiguration of the PSP began addressing the Republic’s diplomatic relationship with countries of the Non-Alignment Movement. Neutrality as a term to identify “wavering” or non-committed ideological positioning was never erased, nor was the demand for unyielding political and ideological loyalty to the anticommunist project. However, from 1958-60, the adamancy that marked the domestic application of the term contrasted with how neutralist countries were approached in the Republican anticommunist discourse. This came with new political imperatives around international recognition and economic development and growing political and economic ties to neutralist countries in the Asian and African developing world.

In the document “The Path of Development for the Republic of Vietnam,” the second study material distributed by the central directing body for year 1959, neutrality, in contrast to the Personalist project of the Republic, is a unique developmental path on the part of many Asian and African states centered around a diplomatic strategy which sought economic ties to both sides of the Cold War. Indeed, rather than condemning the neutralist policies of these other nation-states, the imperatives of establishing diplomatic ties shifted the anti-neutralist narrative to argue that neutrality was an impossibility *in the case of Vietnam*.<sup>19</sup> The piece argues that, although many of these states are neutral diplomatically, domestically, they implement anti-communist policies or were economically capitalist. This was evident for countries like Egypt or Cambodia, as both had diplomatic ties with the Republic and was lauded for their domestic anticommunist policies.<sup>20</sup>

On the grounds that these countries were domestically anticommunist, the case is made that these countries were not necessarily “neutralist.” This applied to countries like Yugoslavia, India, Egypt, Japan, and Iraq which “at one point succumbed to the communists and followed neutrality, but now saw that communists were exploitative and corrupt and thus began adopting

<sup>18</sup> “Tài Liệu Học Hồi Vấn Đề ‘Phòng Gian Bảo Mật’” in Folder No. 29164, Phủ Thủ Tướng VNCH, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*.

<sup>19</sup> “Chúng ta không theo lối ngoại giao trung lập ấy. Nước ta bị chia hai... Vì thế, chúng ta cần có một đường lối chống Cộng rõ rệt để bảo vệ nền độc lập của chúng ta.” Quoted from “Đường Lối Phát Triển của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam” in Folder No. 20186, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của UB Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TƯ v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị các tài liệu số 1/59, 2/59, 5/59, 6/59 năm 1959*.

<sup>20</sup> “Còn trong nội trị, thì nhiều nước trung lập ấy chống cộng, cầm đảng Cộng Sản hoạt động (Ai Cập...) và theo đường lối phát triển tự do tư bản chủ nghĩa: chẳng hạn như không có cải cách điền địa để phân phối ruộng đất lại, không có các cuộc cách mạng xã hội để cải tiến dân sinh (Cao Miên...)” Ibid.

anticommunist attitudes.”<sup>21</sup> “Recent Events” reports utilized in the PSP include evidence of this “nominal” neutralism. One reported on the formation of a “Neutralist Alliance” in Arab countries designed to ward communist infiltration in the Middle East,<sup>22</sup> and another on how Cambodia, an ostensibly neutralist country, did not succumb to communist propaganda surrounding the Phú Lợi prison affairs of 1959.<sup>23</sup>

Neutralism, as depicted in the post-CDTC period, was a failing strategy on the part of international communism. Countries were supposedly becoming “gradually anticommunist.” Even India, the face of Cold War neutrality, was forced to condemn communist actions following recent incursions by Communist China.<sup>24</sup> Neutralism was, thus, a temporary diplomatic stance that would undoubtedly change once countries acquire “experience with communism.”<sup>25</sup>

When it came to the domestic affairs of Vietnam, however, attitude towards neutralism remained adamantly oppositional. One study material in 1959 utilized “resoluteness” against communism to describe the constitution of the Republic as fundamentally different from the four “Vietnamese constitutions” that came before.<sup>26</sup> Another, reviewed the concept of PGBM and reemphasized the need to “determine our standpoint” through self-reform, thereby making “resolute our thoughts.” Repeating the 1955 formulation of the concept, the document stated, “to clearly determine the direction of our political struggle, we must be clear of our allies and enemies.” To properly perform as a “cadre,” one must “resolutely stand in the ranks of the Nation and direct the people against all threats and propaganda of the VC.”<sup>27</sup>

The proliferation of terms like “resoluteness” and “standpoint” transformed notions once embedded in the discussion on neutralism into a distinct concept within the Republican anticommunist conversation. The modularity of the term allowed it to be utilized as a mobilizing mantra for a host of political issues rather than neutralism exclusively. One article from the journal *Gió Nam*—an organ devoted to the ideological training of civil servants—rehashed the theme of “fear of communist retribution” originally established as one of the three categories of

<sup>21</sup> “Chiến Thuật ‘Sống Chung Hòa Bình’ Của Cộng Sản,” Folder No. 20357, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dẫn học tập “Đường Lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng hòa năm 1960.*

<sup>22</sup> “Sắp có liên đoàn Á rập Chống Cộng Chặng?” in CV Số 7/HTTU/BS/PG dated 1.8.1959, Folder No. 20192, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị “Đối Phó với công tác tuyên truyền giáo dục, hướng dẫn nhân dân đấu tranh của Việt cộng” năm 1959.*

<sup>23</sup> “Báo chí miền điện với vụ đầu độc giả tạo ở Phú Lợi.” Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> “Chính Phủ Ấn Độ, sau vụ biên giới Bắc Ấn bị Trung Cộng xâm lăng... gần đây cũng đã phải lên tiếng cảnh cáo Cộng Sản. Chính Phủ Nam Dương hiện nay cũng đang phải cảnh cáo Trung Cộng trong đước can thiệp vào chính sách Nam Dương đối với Hoa Kiều. Nasser gần đây cũng ra lệnh gọi các sinh viên học ở Nga về để cho sang học Tây Phương” cited from “Tại Sao Chống Cộng,” Folder No. 20354, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Phủ Tổng Thống, Liên Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia hướng dẫn học tập chống cộng năm 1960.*

<sup>25</sup> “Cần sống với Cộng Sản, càng hiểu biết cộng sản thì lại càng chán ghét Cộng Sản, đó là một điều mà trogn suốt bao năm qua thực tế đã luôn luôn chứng tỏ.” cited from “Tại Sao Chống Cộng.”

<sup>26</sup> “Tinh Thần và Giá Trị Hiến Pháp Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” distributed for study sessions on 9.23.1959 in PTTĐỊCH, Folder No. 20188, *Tài Liệu của VP Đồng Lý v/v học tập chính trị “Tinh Thần và Giá Trị Hiến Pháp VNCH” năm 1959.*

<sup>27</sup> “Kế Hoạch Đối Phó Với Chủ Trương Hướng Dẫn Nhân Dân Đấu Tranh của Việt Cộng” distributed on 3.30.1959 for sessions on Thursday 4.2.1959. In PTTĐỊCH, Folder No. 20192, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị “Đối Phó với công tác tuyên truyền giáo dục, hướng dẫn nhân dân đấu tranh của Việt Cộng năm 1959*

individuals who remain “neutral.” Although never using the term “neutralism” or even “resoluteness,” the piece describes these individuals as those who are “too fearful, too admiring of the Communists” that they allow such fears and admiration to become a “inferiority complex.” This “inferiority complex” is problematic because it “causes them to lose all will to oppose communism.” Furthermore, because of this fear, they are easily duped, can accidentally propagandize for the enemy, can be easily exploited, and lose faith in the “righteousness of the Nation.” The solution was to have “self-confidence” and “bravely stare in the face of the communists to destroy them.”<sup>28</sup>

Another article, written by the future overseer of the Strategic Hamlet Program, Dr. Trần Kim Tuyền, problematizes the current state of “resoluteness” in the Republic. He argues “every day, I meet many individuals who are full of good intentions, uncompromising in opposing communism, believe in the righteousness of the Republic; but when I talk to them, they still bring up queries, and to come down to it, they demonstrate that they are at odds with themselves.” He argues that citizens of the Republic occasionally suffer from the “illness of detachment” *bệnh khách quan*. This resulted from individuals failing to be “resolute” when it comes to determining their personal “direction of activity.” What this meant was that individuals have not properly contemplated what they could realistically do to within their personal circumstances contribute to the nation. Furthermore, individuals must be clear about the intentions and purpose of their actions. They must ask “what do I want,” “where am I going.” These were questions of ideals answered often by “independence and unity, freedom and happiness...opposition against the threat of communism.” Yet, to get to this point, a single “road” must be decided upon and this decision must come with deep contemplation. That decision must be made with “resoluteness.” That individual must truly believe in the decision made and fully act in accordance with that decision.<sup>29</sup>

Examples of the rehashing and reinterpretation of “resoluteness” were abundant after the CDTC and remained a staple aspect of Republican political philosophy.<sup>30</sup> The fundamental

<sup>28</sup> Nguyễn Bích Liên, “Trên Con Đường Chống Cộng—Một Mặc Cảm Tai Hại!” *Gió Nam* (is. 8), 8-9.

<sup>29</sup> Trần Kim Tuyền, “Góp Phần Vào Vấn Đề Học tập,” *Gió Nam* (is. 13), 14-21. This document was made an official PSP document for the Ministry of Administration and Transportation in March of 1963 (CV số 5-CC/TTK/HT, Folder No. 1600, BCCGT (1948-1966), *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập đề tài của Bác Sĩ Trần Kim Tuyền về vấn đề học tập năm 1963*. Trần Kim Tuyền and Ngô Đình Nhu also expanded on the domestic usage of “resoluteness” in their interpretation of the Chiêu Hồi Program, implemented as an initiative as part of the Strategic Hamlet. Literally translated as “invitation to return,” the Chiêu Hồi Program as it was originally conceived entailed not only the “return” of insurgent soldiers to the nation, but also by those who are already in the nation to return to its ideals (“Huấn Thị của Ông Cố Vấn Chính Trị Nhân Dịp Lễ Bế Giảng Khóa II Chiêu Hồi Tại Học Viện Quốc Gia Hành Chánh Ngày 16.3.63” in Số 641/QT/HT dated 5.2.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*).

<sup>30</sup> Examples from 1959-1960; From *Gió Nam*: Võ Quý Hy, “Phòng Gian Bảo Mật” *Gió Nam* (18), (March, 1960), 18-19; Thanh Vũ, “Người Công Chức Với Ngày Kỷ Niệm 7-7,” *Gió Nam* (22) (July 1960), 6-7; “Thông Nhất Ý Chí và Hành Động,” *Gió Nam* (24) (September 1960), 3. “Thái Độ Của Người CCCMQG Trong Tình Thế Hiện Tại,” *Gió Nam* (27) (December 1960), 3-4; Đoàn Thêm, “Những Tâm Trạng Cần Cứu Chữa,” *Gió Nam* (27) (December 1960), 8-9. The concept was also remobilized following the 11-11-1960 attempted coup of the President which was interpreted as a collusion between disenchanted soldiers and enemies of the Republic—colonialism, feudalism, and communism. In a statement published in *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*—an ideological forum in the military—the paper states that “every level of the military-people-government must acknowledge that we must have an uncompromising attitude with the enemy” (*Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*, [Is. 49], [December 1960], 4). The same argument was made by Việt

essence of the term—unwavering position towards communism and loyalty to the Republic—never disappeared. A “neutral,” “detached” attitude towards the affairs of the nation was not tolerated in such a philosophy. Indeed, this intolerance stood in stark contrast to the diplomatic dealings of the Republic which had economic and political ties to “neutralist countries.” While the Republic was more lax on its diplomatic ties, domestically, the politics was adamantly anticommunist. The condemnation of neutralist countries was not within the political reach of the Republic of Vietnam and political imperatives to acquire international recognition and developmental aid moderated how international neutralism was depicted.

*The Laotian Civil War and the Conjoining of Domestic Adamancy and Diplomatic Policy*

While the attitude towards “neutralist” countries were moderated following the 1958 reconfigurations, events in 1961, however, quickly brought the adamant anti-neutralism of the domestic sphere into the realm of international politics. This was due to growing concerns over the “neutralization” of Laos. When it came to Laos—a country sharing a border with South Vietnam—the anti-neutralist narrative of eventual communist takeover replaced that of eventual disenchantment. This was an ideological disjuncture from how the Republican discourse depicts other neutralist countries like India, Yugoslavia, or Egypt. For the Republic, the fates of the two countries were intertwined, and Laos, under any form of communist influence, was a threat to the national security of the Republic. Because of the geopolitical entwinement of these two countries, the neutralization of Laos was taken as the neutralization of South Vietnam itself. Indeed, as talks in Geneva began over the future geopolitical status of Laos, anti-neutralism reached new heights in the Republican discourse. The concept of “resoluteness” was transplanted from the domestic into the international. However, to argue that Laos was an “international” concern would be somewhat misleading. The stakes were not some country thousands of miles away, but rather a bordering neighbor whose “neutrality” would have deep repercussions on the South’s brewing war against its enemy in the north.

In 1960, civil war broke out between the Royal Lao Army and the Pathet Lao. These hostile parties in the Laotian conflict were supported by the opposing blocs of the Cold War. The Royal Lao Army was funded and supplied by the United States while the Pathet Lao was supported by the joint efforts of China, North Vietnam, and the Soviet Union. Early in 1961, the United States and Britain began initiatives to find a political solution to the conflict and was soon joined by the Soviet Union and China.<sup>31</sup> The crisis in Laos brought in the political intervention of cold war superpowers and the Indochinese country soon turned into a geopolitical battleground.

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Dân in “Ý Kiến Bạn Đọc: Cần phải đặt vấn đề củng cố hàng ngũ chống Cộng.” (*Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*, [Is. 49], [December 1960], 8).

<sup>31</sup> Early initiative to establish international inspection for ceasefire: “Anh-Mỹ và Ai Lao hoàn toàn đồng ý về việc tái lập ủy hội quốc tế ở Lào.” *Saigon Mới*, 1.5.1961; “Các nhà quan sát Luân Đôn cho rằng một sự Chia Đồi Nước Lào,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.12.1961; “Mỹ Tân thành ý kiến của Anh nhằm tái lập Ủy Hội QT Ở Ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.25.1961; “Nội Các Ai Lao sẽ mở rộng” *Saigon Mới*, 2.10.1961. Soviet involvement: “Hội đàm Nga Mỹ về Ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 2.22.1961; Various other countries also turned their attention to Laos: “14.000 Người Trung Hoa Dân Quốc tình nguyện đi đánh Cộng Sản ở Ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.24.1961; “Bộ Ngoại Giao Nhật Bản Đề Nghị: Đề Ai Lao Trung Lập,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.26.1961; “1.000 Chí Nguyện Quân Phi nhận lời sang chiến đấu chống cộng ở Lào,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.10.1961; United Nation: “10 giải pháp quan trọng Do ông Tổng Thư Ký LHQ đề nghị để giải quyết cuộc khủng hoảng ở Ai Lao—Pháp – Lào cùng chung nhau trong căn cứ Seno” *Saigon Mới*, 2.9.1961.

In the Vietnamese press, Laos' future was an open question, subjected to predictions and theories including the possibility of direct intervention by American troops and the splitting of Laos into opposing spheres of influence.<sup>32</sup> Most pressing for the Republic was the issue of North Vietnamese forces fighting alongside the Pathet Lao just across the western borders. Indeed, since 1959, Hanoi had been using the highlands of Laos to transport munitions, supplies, and manpower to the growing insurgency in the South. News reports throughout early 1961 were replete with cited incidents of North Vietnamese participating in the major offensives of the Pathet Lao and illustrates the increasing presence of Vietnamese communist troops on the battlefield.<sup>33</sup> These reports laid alongside reports on captured, executed, and imprisoned communist agents in the South as the formalization of the National Front for the Liberation of Vietnam was made known.<sup>34</sup> The capture of multiple Vietnamese communist operatives in Laos during the month of March made this an evident reality.<sup>35</sup> The indeterminate future of Laos, furthermore, made the possibility of Laos turning into a communist state a very real threat, militarily strangling the Southern Republic from the north and the west. By late February, however, the direction of talks turned towards that of neutrality. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of March, the Soviet Union had agreed to discuss a ceasefire and—agreeing to the American proposal—neutral status for the country.<sup>36</sup> In early May of 1961, a ceasefire was reached, and, on the 16<sup>th</sup>, a conference opened in Geneva to politically resolve the conflict in Laos.<sup>37</sup>

The South Vietnamese narrative on the neutrality of Laos demonstrates the merging of domestic and international discourse on neutralism. Recall that, in 1955, international neutralism was depicted as a scheme by the Soviet Union to prevent countries from aligning themselves with the Free World. Beginning in 1958, this narrative shifted to argue that neutralism was a failed strategy because of the eventual disenchantment that neutralist countries would develop towards communism. When it came to the affairs internal to Vietnam, however, neutralism was a dangerous philosophy that must be eradicated because it would lead to communist takeover

<sup>32</sup> “Quân Đội Mỹ sẽ gọi sang chiến đấu ở Ai Lao?” *Saigon Mới*, 3.24.1961; “Về Địa Hạt Quân Sự, Mỹ Sản Sàng tiếp cứu Ai Lao,” 3.26.1961. Split predictions: “Quân Đội Thái đặt trong tình trạng báo động vì sợ Ai Lao sẽ bị chia 2 như Hàn Quốc,” *Saigon Mới*, 3.30.1961;

<sup>33</sup> “Tòa Đại Sứ Hoa Kỳ tại Saigon tường thuật vụ cộng sản tấn công phi cơ ngoại giao của Mỹ ở Ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.6.1961; “Quân Việt Cộng tràn vào rất nhiều ở Ai Lao Đại Chiến ở Ban Ban,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.8.1961; “Phái đoàn VN tố cáo với Ủy Hội Quốc Tế: VC Xâm Nhập Ai Lao Là Mối Hăm Dọa nghiêm trọng đối với VNCH,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.10.1961; “1 Đại Đội VC có mặt ở Vang Viêng,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.19.1961; “3.000 quân việt cộng tiến vào 2 tỉnh Saravane và Savannakhet,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.23.1961; “Ông Bộ Trưởng Thông Tin Norasing tố cáo đã có bằng cứ 7 Tiểu Đoàn VC ở Ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.27.1961; “Chánh Phủ Hoàng Gia tố cáo có nhiều Việt Cộng trên đất Lào, Quân Ai Lao Bắc Tiến,” *Saigon Mới*, 1.31.1961; “Quân Đội Hoàng Gia Lào đã oanh liệt Tiến Vào Nam Đồng Chum—Hoàng quân chiếm được Sala Ploukheng, Ponkhoun có 11 tiểu đoàn VC trên đất Lào,” *Saigon Mới*, 2.4.1961;

<sup>34</sup> “Bọn Việt Cộng toan tính gì nữa đây khi đưa 1 nhóm bù nhìn tay sai để lập “Chánh Phủ” giải phóng miền nam?” *Saigon Mới*, 1.20.1961.

<sup>35</sup> “Sự Can Thiệp của Việt Cộng tại Ai Lao” *Saigon Mới* 3.27.1961 citing AFP. Question of whether there were North Vietnamese troops in Laos was still an open question in January of 1961 (“Ai Lao sẽ đi về đâu?” *Saigon Mới* 1.3.1961, citing AFP.)

<sup>36</sup> “Nga Sô có lẽ chấp nhận nguyên tắc thương thuyết để giải quyết vấn đề Ai Lao” *Saigon Mới* 3.29.61, citing AFP; “Đề Bảo vệ Hòa Bình và Trung Lập cho Ai Lao, Mỹ Kêu gọi Nga Sô,” *Saigon Mới*, 2.23.1961; “Hội Đàm quan trọng Anh-Pháp-Mỹ và Nga về nền trung lập Ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 2.24.1961.

<sup>37</sup> “Đài Phát Thanh P. Lào và Chánh Phủ đều ráo riết keo gọi ngừng bắn khắp Ai Lao.” *Saigon Mới* 5.5.1961. “Mặc dầu Cộng quân vẫn tấn công ở Lào, hội nghị Giơ Neô Đã Khai Mạc” 5.17.1961.

applied. This domestic application resulted in the development of associated concepts such as “resoluteness” and “standpoint” as a means to demand unwavering opposition to communism and loyalty to the Republic. In 1961, these depictions merged.

In a public commentary, the newspaper *Saigon Mới* depicts Laos as a victim of communist duplicity. Rather than supporting the neutrality of Laos, the newspaper demonstrates pessimism towards the Geneva talks. *Saigon Mới* argues that unless the “rightful aspirations of the people of Laos” were respected and the talks were “uncompromising with the infiltrators,” the 1961 Geneva Conference will ultimately fail. These aspirations, as described by the newspaper, were antithetical to the proposed neutrality. Neutralism was a trap.<sup>38</sup>

Despite the fact that neutrality of Laos was supported by both France and America, the “neutralization” of Laos was blamed on “international communism.” The newspaper argues that neutralism would allow communists to overtake Laos, “transforming Laos into a strategic staging post directly against the Republic of Vietnam.” The piece goes on to call upon the Free World to firmly “destroy the schemes of the communist bloc.” The lack of this firmness would encourage the communists and eventually all would be lost. The loss of Laos to neutralism would mean the loss of Indochina to the communists.<sup>39</sup> This spelled not only strategic failure for the Free World, but disaster for the people of those countries. Neutralism, as argued, was against the aspirations of the people of Laos and to assign Laos neutral status would be to sacrifice Laos for the preservation of an ill-gotten peace.<sup>40</sup>

In April, *Gió Nam* published a multi-issue lengthy piece written by Văn Hiến. The series was a historical commentary on neutralism and threat of communist infiltration in Southeast Asia. The piece focuses on Cambodia, an ostensibly neutralist country, which oscillated between the communist bloc and the Free World based on what was beneficial for Cambodians. However, when it comes to its relationship with South Vietnam and Thailand, Cambodia had adopted a conflictual position. As argued, “Cambodia has aided rebels and the Viet Cong to disrupt the provinces which sit on the Vietnamese western borders.” This policy was blamed on the ambitions of Cambodians to raise their status in Southeast Asia as well as to “court the Communists by creating pressure against the West.” The neutralism of Cambodia is depicted as a threat because it is easily manipulated by communists “to infiltrate and disrupt Southeast Asia and especially Free Vietnam.” Furthermore, the prevalence of Chinese Communist operatives in Cambodia was of great concern and, despite Sihanouk taking measures to ensure Cambodian neutralism, the strength of communist influence in Cambodia points to the possibility of the complete takeover by the communists.<sup>41</sup>

The piece argues that, given the political conditions in Cambodia, the recent crisis in Laos was “the opening phase for the communist invasion of Southeast Asia.” Southeast Asia was a “granary” which produces a massive amount of rice, fuel, and rubber—all major resources that could offset the military and economic balance between the Communist Bloc and the Free World. Since January of 1961, the article argues, Beijing and Moscow had devised a detailed strategy for the invasion of Southeast Asia. Beginning with creating a crisis in Laos, international

<sup>38</sup> Multi-series commentary: “Chung Quanh vấn đề ai Lao,” *Saigon Mới*, 5.15-18.1961

<sup>39</sup> “Hậu quả của sự Trung lập nằm trong tay Cộng Sản Quốc Tế ở Ai Lao sẽ đưa tới một hiểm họa cho Đông Nam Á” quoted from “Ý Kiến Chúng Tôi”, *Saigon Mới*, 5.21.1961;

<sup>40</sup> “Xã Luận: Dân Tộc Tai Lao phải được Quyền Tự Quyết,” *Saigon Mới*, 5.19.1961.

<sup>41</sup> Văn Hiến, “Những Cuộc Khủng Hoảng Lào Quốc Thử Tìm Hiểu Qua Tình Hình Chính Trị Các Quốc Gia Đông Nam Á,” *Gió Nam* (31), 18-20.



communists sought to destabilize the region enough for military penetration. The strategy for such an endeavor rests predominantly upon transporting supplies and arms south through the mountain ranges that lay at western borders of Vietnam. If Beijing's and Moscow's plans for invasion are not prevented in time, the article predicts that "war would erupt across Southeast Asia and overtake, firstly, the entirety of Asia, then to Europe and South America." The current state of affair for non-communist countries in Southeast Asia was particularly detrimental. Not only are these countries unprepared to face such a massive threat, but leading countries like Britain and America have not yet acknowledged the severity of this threat.<sup>42</sup>

Given the possibility of a communist invasion via the neutralization of Laos and Cambodia, the article argues that the West must cease its "concessionary attitude" *thái độ nhượng bộ*. The Free World, states the article, "because lacking a unified and uncompromising will, has often been in a position of passivity and thus unable to timely and effectively...deal with the schemes of the Communist Bloc." Thus, America and the Free World must adopt a more "unwavering attitude" at the Geneva talks while also mobilizing its military in the Pacific as a preventive measure to ensure the security of Southeast Asia.<sup>43</sup>

By July of 1961, the neutrality of Laos was an evident topic in study sessions. On July 7<sup>th</sup>, Double Seven Day, Diệm delivered his annual speech and emphasized the threat of neutralism. Diệm argues that "communists are not neutral" and were responsible for the "terrorism, bloodshed, and invasion" that the Republic was currently facing. He asked the familiar question: "can we be neutralist?" Again, evidently the answer was no. For Diệm, when it came to this "inhumane" philosophy of neutralism, "we must entirely reject with the intention of eradicating" and, faced with the growing threat of military insurgency and infiltration, "we cannot be neutralists. We must fight for survival."<sup>44</sup>

The PSP directed the study of Diệm's speech throughout the month of July. Study sessions largely repeated the established narrative, often using a question-answer format to allow participation of attendees. Restating established views of the time, the presentation for the general study assembly for all organs under the Directorate of Police and Security held on Double Seven Day argued that "neutralization of Laos is simply a protracted strategy...to dupe, to find ways to capture the state to lay the foundations of domination." The depiction of Laos stands in clear contrast with the depiction of other neutral countries. The presenter argues, "countries like India and Burma following the neutralism of the communists had begun to awaken after military incursions by Communist China who sought ways to infiltrate their soil."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Văn Hiến, "Đông Nam Á Trước Hiểm Họa Cộng Sản," *Gió Nam* (33), 6-7, 51.

<sup>43</sup> "Thế giới tự do vì thiếu sự thống nhất ý chí, thiếu cương quyết nên thường ở vào thế bị động không xử dụng kịp thời và hữu hiệu lực lượng và tài nguyên để đối phó với âm mưu xâm lược của khối cộng sản....Tình thế chỉ đổi khác nếu các cường quốc Tây phương và nhất là Mỹ Quốc có một thái độ cương quyết hơn tại hội nghị Geneve để tạo nước Lào thành một quốc gia trung lập thực sự và sẵn sàng giúp đỡ chính phủ hợp pháp của nước này bằng mọi phương tiện nếu hội nghị Geneve không đem lại những kết quả mong muốn. Đồng thời, Mỹ quốc và khối Tây phương cũng cần áp dụng ngay những biện pháp cấp thời để củng cố cho Việt Nam Cộng Hòa và Thái Lan....Tóm lại, việc bảo vệ Đông Nam Á cần được thực hiện cấp thời với sự thống nhất ý chí và thái độ cương quyết của Mỹ quốc và các cường quốc Tây Phương." Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> "Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH đọc ngày Lễ Song Thất 1961," *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa* (63), July 1963, 3.

<sup>45</sup> "Biên Bản Buổi học tập đặc biệt của toàn thể nhân viên Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Cảnh Sát và Công An Trong Dịp Lễ Song Thất 1961 tại Hội Trường Phòng Nội Dịch Nha Tổng Giám Đốc hồi 9 giờ 30 ngày 7-7-1961." Folder No. 20531, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*

During individual sessions at the study cell level, when asked why the “VC utilized the slogan of neutralism,” one participant responded “the communist always want to use ‘neutralism’ to cover up their intentions to infiltrate.”<sup>46</sup> In another study session, when asked “can we be neutralist,” one participant responded “We cannot be neutralist, but we must unwaveringly reject and destroy this philosophy...the Communists are not neutral, they exploit this philosophy to disrupt, terrorize, create bloodshed, and destroy all dignity and freedom.”<sup>47</sup> In another session, the presenter argued to be neutralist would be to “hold hands with the infiltrators.” Neutralism only appealed to “pacifists, new countries who have no experience with the communists.”<sup>48</sup> Neutralism was equated with “playing with a poisonous snake.” To do so would be dangerous, thus “we must smash its head in, or else it will not day bite and transfer its poison.”<sup>49</sup> Study sessions called for the “condemnation” of neutralism, equating it with a communist scheme for infiltration. As one session presider argued, “when a person puts forward the theory of neutralism, we have the responsibility to destroy its propagandistic arguments.”<sup>50</sup>

The same message on neutralism was delivered by Presidential speeches on National Day and the annual address to the National Assembly. In the former, Diệm established that the three enemies of the people of the Republic today were “communism, underdevelopment, and disunity.”<sup>51</sup> In study sessions, neutralism was tied to the issue of “disunity.”<sup>52</sup> Neutralism, as clearly depicted in one PSP presentation, was “treason, neutralism is reactionary, neutralism is to shake hands with the Viet Cong, neutralism is selling the nation to Soviet-China.” To be “neutralist” before the circumstances of the nation would be to ignore the plight of “our compatriots in the North who are in a bind of suffering, humans are treated as animals, their dignity was stepped on, without rice to eat or clothes to wear.” To be neutralist would be to

<sup>46</sup> “Biên Bản buổi học tập chánh trị ngày 4-7-61 hồi 16g30” by Ty Cảnh Sát Thương Khẩu, Folder No. 20531, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*

<sup>47</sup> “Biên bản của sở hành chánh ngày 13-7-61 hồi 7 giờ 30 tại Phòng Hội Tổng Nha” Folder No. 20531, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*

<sup>48</sup> “Biên bản buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của Chi Văn Phòng Cảnh Sát cuộc ngày 14 tháng 7 năm 1961.” Folder No. 20531, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*

<sup>49</sup> “Ta không thể đùa với rắn độc được, hãy đập cho nát đầu nó ra, kéo một ngày kia nó cắn vầy truyền nọc độc thì mạng sống khó an toàn” quoted from “Biên bản ba buổi học tập chánh trị tại Phòng Hội Cảnh Sát Cuộc cho những ngày 12, 13, 14 tháng 7 năm 1961 vào lúc 15g30.” Folder No. 20531, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*

<sup>50</sup> “Vì cộng sản luôn hoạt động phá hoại và hơn nữa, có một số người đang đưa ra thuyết Trung Lập, vậy mình phải có nhiệm vụ đã phá những luận điệu tuyên truyền xuyên tạc đó” quoted from “Biên Bản Buổi học tập của Sở Hành Chánh ngày 13-7-61 hồi 7 giờ 30 tại Phòng Hội Tổng Nha” Folder No. 20531, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*

<sup>51</sup> “Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày Lê Quốc Khánh 1961,” *Gió Nam* (38), inside cover page.

<sup>52</sup> When asked: “why must we fight against disunity in the country?” one participant responded: “in the period in which the nation is divided, one half is under the domination of Russia-China...thus we cannot be Neutralists, because Neutralism accepts the suffering of the present, accepting the division of the country and incidentally aid the communist to dominate South Vietnam” quoted from “Biên bản buổi học tập chánh trị ngày 29-11-61 hồi 16g30” by Ty Cảnh Sát Thương Khẩu in Folder No. 20532, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11 và 12. 1961*

accept this suffering, the division of the country, and allow the communists to oppress “1 million of our countrymen.”<sup>53</sup>

In the latter, the recent event in Laos led Diệm to redefine “communists” as “an organization meant to capture the state and are only satisfied when they had completely destroyed all people, everyone, regardless of men or women, who do not follow them.” They are not defined by Marxism or Socialism, but rather this intent to seize state power. As Diem argued, “before their schemes to overtake the world, we cannot effectively combat [the communists] on the basis of Marxist or Socialist theory, because [these theories]...no longer matter to the communist organizations of the present day.” Their “philosophy” was that of terrorism and infiltration and they would implement all measures to achieve their aim of state capture. Neutralism, as it follows, was just among one of the various measures that this organization would utilize to capture state power. Ultimately, to be neutralist would be aiding the communists—intentionally or not—in their attempt to overthrow the state.<sup>54</sup>

The reinterpretation of the anti-neutralist discourse brought about by the possibility of “neutralization” in Laos affected Republican policies as well. For South Vietnam, the fate of Laos was tied to the fate of the Republic. The neutralization of Laos forecasted of the neutralization of Vietnam. Laos’ neutral status would drastically influence the South’s conflict with the communist North. Indeed, the neutralization of Laos meant the eventual takeover of Vietnam by communist forces. The growing communist insurgency in the South made this “eventuality” all too real. Thus, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, during his address to the National Assembly, Diệm declared a “State of Emergency.” Due to developments in Laos, no longer was the Republic fighting a “guerrilla war,” the President declared, the South was now engaged in “an actual war.”<sup>55</sup> Political forums and the PSP, contradictorily, sought to assuage fears resulting from this declaration despite months of riling on the threat that the neutrality of Laos posed and its entwinement with brewing military insurgency in Vietnam.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> “Biên Bản Ba buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng tại Phòng Hội Cảnh Sát Cuộc Quận 5 những ngày 8, 9, 10 tháng 11 năm 1961 lúc 15g30” in Folder No. 20532, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11 và 12. 1961*

<sup>54</sup> “Thông điệp của Tổng Thống đọc trước Quốc Hội trong buổi Khai Mạc Khóa họp thường lệ (2-10-1961)” *Gió Nam* (38), 1-4, 16, 53-54.

<sup>55</sup> The State of Emergency is validated by order of the President in Directive 209-TTP on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October (Sắc Lệnh Tuyên Bó Tình Trạng Khẩn Cấp trên toàn lãnh thổ VNCH” *Chiến Sĩ* [81], 14), and the National Assembly on the 18<sup>th</sup> voted in favor of Law 13/61 which extend the powers of the President to unilaterally declare laws during this period of “emergency” to combat the “invasion” of communist operatives to the south fueling the insurgency against the regime (“Luật Số 13/61 do Quốc Hội biểu quyết chấp thuận ngày 18-10-1961 và Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa ban hành ngày 19-10-1961,” *Chiến Sĩ* [81], 14).

<sup>56</sup> Anticipating responses to the grim declaration, the Republican government focused on assuaging possible unease with this change in domestic policies. The NRM journal *Chiến Sĩ*—a forum for the “training and information” for civil servants and political cadres—published a lengthy article proselytizing the “correct appraisal” *quan niệm đúng đắn* of these changes (HTN, “Nhiệm Vụ trước tình thế mới,” *Chiến Sĩ* [82], 10-12). The “correct appraisal” of the State of Emergency was embedded into the political study sessions held in November and was proffered as to how Diem’s recent address to the National Assembly and on National Day were to be interpreted. Political study presenters emphasized the need to “eliminate every negative and pessimistic ideas” regarding the State of Emergency. The seriousness of the State of Emergency is explained away as “an obvious condition of any nation during an era of war” and was a “collective measure” intended to “awaken” individuals to their responsibilities to the nation (Collated from Folder No. 20532, PTTĐỊCH, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11 và 12. 1961*).

The Republic's call for a more "unwavering" attitude by the West at the Geneva talks continued throughout 1961 and into 1962. Adamancy of the South Vietnamese position on the neutrality of Laos never dimmed. After all, for the Republic, not only was their security at stake, but also that of the entirety of Southeast Asia. As these talks progressively spelled out the inevitability of Laos' neutrality, the Republic amped up reports on the presence of the North Vietnamese Army and emphasized ongoing violation of the ceasefire by both the Pathet Laos and their Vietnamese communist allies. Worse, supplies and arms from North Vietnam were increasingly being funneled to the insurgency in the South. The neutrality of Laos, not yet formalized, was already spelling disaster for the South Vietnamese anticommunist project. These events only brought further credence to the South Vietnamese position on neutralism—a pathway for a wholesale communist invasion. In early July 1962, the Geneva talks settled on the formation of a neutralist coalition government represented by both the Pathet Laos and the Royal Laos Army. The new Laos government, however, had chosen to recognize the communist government in the North. For three days, July 10-13<sup>th</sup>, the South Vietnamese delegation protested the conference by refusing to participate in scheduled talks.<sup>57</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos was signed by the 13 delegations of the Geneva talks—including that of the Republic of Vietnam.<sup>58</sup>

Seeking to justify the Republic's signature on the 1962 Declaration, the Republican Secretary of State argued that South Vietnam was neither "disappointed" nor "hopeful." The delegation's signature was due to the desire to "realistically" contribute to the neutrality of Laos and to prevent the presence of foreign troops on Laos soil. The Republic called upon the delegations in Geneva to "be aware" and thwart those who "disrupt and invade" the territory of Laos. If neutrality was not maintained, it was the duty of those who signed the Declaration to intervene.<sup>59</sup>

Ngô Đình Nhu gave an interview to UPI on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July. He was far more adamant. Repeating that "Laos will only help the communists in their scheme to colonize South Vietnam," the issue was not that the collaboration between the hostile parties in the Laos conflict would be "dishonest." Rather, despite any good intentions, the North Vietnamese would utilize Laos to infiltrate South Vietnam. He goes so far as to argue that even the United States had "fallen into the influence of the communist strategy."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> "Vi Ai Lao Thừa Nhận Hà Nội và Việt Cộng ngày càng tăng gia đột nhập miền Nam, nên Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Tắt Chạy Hội Nghị Geneve" *Saigon Mới*, 7.11.62; "Phái đoàn Việt Nam đã nhận được chỉ thị dự trở lại hội nghị Geneve," *Saigon Mới*, 7.15.1962.

<sup>58</sup> The Republic actually delayed its signature on the 1962 Declaration, refusing to allow it to be passed on the same day as the Geneva Accords some 8 years earlier. The Republican delegation argued that it would be utilized by communists as propaganda ("Phái Đoàn Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Ký hay không? 23-7: Ai Lao Trung Lập ra đời," *Saigon Mới*, 7.20.1961). The 13 signatories are as follows: Union of Burma, the Kingdom of Cambodia, Canada, the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of France, the Republic of India, the Polish People's Republic, the Republic of Vietnam, the Kingdom of Thailand, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America ("Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos and Protocol Signed at Geneva," *The Department of State Bulletin*, (XLVII)1207, 259-263).

<sup>59</sup> "Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Không Nuôi Áo Vọng Khi Chấp Nhận Hiệp Định về Ai Lao" *Saigon Mới*, 7.24.1961, quoting the Republic's Secretary of State, Vũ Văn Mẫu on 7.22.1961.

<sup>60</sup> "Thông Tả Xá UPI Phòng Vấn Ông Cố Vấn Ngô Đình Nhu: Tân Chính Phủ Ai Lao chỉ sẽ giúp Cộng Sản Âm Mưu thôn tính miền Nam VN." *Saigon Mới*, 7.29.1962.

The inevitability of communist takeover continues to dominate the discourse on Laos after the Geneva signings. By 1963, this argument was a staple caricature of the South Vietnamese narrative on neutralism. A crisis of national security, the military infiltration caused by the neutralism of Laos was utilized to legitimize the Strategic Hamlet—the new state project rolled out in early 1962 to isolate the rural population from insurgent guerrillas. In his annual address to the National Assembly in 1962, Diệm repeated the established narrative that “clearly, the communists exploited the crisis in Laos to cover up their scheme of infiltration.” Resultantly, infiltration fed the insurgency in the South who were “well supplied and are armed by modern weaponry.” The Strategic Hamlet program applied in rural areas was intended to “break communist tactics by preventing them from seizing the initiative in a war without fronts.”<sup>61</sup> The same emphasis on Laos neutralism as a gateway for communist invasion continued to be emphasized up until the very last Double Seven Day in 1963 during PSP sessions.<sup>62</sup>

### *Anti-Neutralism of the Interregnum*

While the Laotian Civil War would continue to rage until 1975, after the collapse of the First Republic, the discursive emphasis of anti-neutralism turned away from neighboring Indochinese states and onto South Vietnam itself.<sup>63</sup> The impetus for such a shift was France. The French President Charles De Gaulle had been progressively advancing a plan to “neutralize” all of Indochina—that is granting the region neutral status and effectively warding off both American and Soviet influence—since the early 1960s. This foreign policy came as a concern to the South Vietnamese who, on the one hand, saw Laos converted to a neutral state following the 1962 Geneva Treaty, and, on the other hand, the closer ties between Cambodia and France in late 1963. Moreover, France began setting its neutralist agendas upon South Vietnam itself in August, coming into direct conflict with American designs for the country.

While conflict between “Gaullist” neutralism and American foreign agenda played out on the world stage, France’s vision for a neutral Indochina was directly confronted within South Vietnam whose anticommunists reframed the issue as a matter of self-determination. Consequently, South Vietnamese anti-neutralism following the collapse of the First Republic was characterized by adamantly confronting France’s foreign policy while simultaneously asserting South Vietnam’s right to determine its own political direction.

An issue crafted around matters of self-determination and faced with ever growing challenges by France and the UN for peace conferences and resolution, anti-neutralism remained stubbornly embedded and reigned as a dominant political position throughout the Interregnum. Indeed, it was *the* decisive issue in the collapse of the Thơ administration in January 1964 and the Quát administration in mid-1965 (see Chapter 6). The military administration of Nguyễn While anti-neutralist sentiments were prominent in the society-led organs like the “National Anticommunist Bloc” of Dr. Hoàng Cơ Bình, the Catholic’s Greater Unity Force, and the activities of the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, anti-neutralist discourse was also exploited by the various Interregnum regimes to mobilize support. Indeed, the 1964 Day of National Resentment

<sup>61</sup> “Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đọc trước Quốc Hội hồi 9 giờ sáng 1-10-62” *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa* (92), 3-6, 36-44.

<sup>62</sup> “Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Nhân Ngày ‘Song Thất’ 1962,” *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa* (86), 4-5.

<sup>63</sup> “Ai Lao: Việt Cộng Lo Tập Kết,” *Saigon Mới*, 7.22.1962; “Tướng Phuomi kêu gọi Tam Hoàng gia nhập mặt trận của ông—P. Lào Mở Cuộc Đánh Lớn—Tỉnh Attopeu vẫn còn bị vây,” *Saigon Mới*, 7.23.1962; “Mặc Dầu Tuyên Ngôn Trung Lập đã ký, Ai Lao vẫn đánh khắp mọi nơi,” *Saigon Mới*, 7.24.1962

targeted not only “10 years of communist atrocities,” but also Gaullist neutralism, riling resentment which recalls the colonial experience under France and the “scheme” between France and the Viet Minh to divide the country at the Geneva Conference. The days surrounding the commemoration were filled with fervid demonstrations by students and activists in support of Khánh’s call for a “Northward March,” including parades with effigies of De Gaulle and Ho Chi Minh throughout the streets of Saigon, vandalization of French statues, a raid on the French Embassy in the city,<sup>64</sup> and rallies in the capitol demanding the nationalization of French property.<sup>65</sup>

Anti-neutralism also shaped key policies enacted during the Interregnum. Khánh redefined neutralists as “communist sympathizers” in the passage of Law 093-SL/CT in February which placed neutralist and communist propagation and activities outside the realm of legality. As noted in Chapter 3, such a law enabled the mass censorship and curbed the civil liberties afforded to Republican citizens after the “November Revolution.” In 1965, as Phan Huy Quát faced criticisms for his suspected neutralist sympathies, he confronted French and UN overtures for peace conferences by rejecting any international proposals that were not first recognized and approved by his government and the Vietnamese people.<sup>66</sup> With the emergence of several domestic “peace movements” in early February, the Quát administration cracked down on two secular organizations two organizations—the Movement for Self-Determination and, its offshoot, the Peace Movement Committee—deeming them “fake peace” organizations which sought to “neutralize” the South. Members were later brought to trial in August and many of their members were sentenced imprisonment and forced labor.<sup>67</sup> Three of their leaders had been deported above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel in mid-March but were eventually exiled to France.<sup>68</sup> State policies and statements of the period were edged on the broader Republican discourse in which

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<sup>64</sup> “Anti-French Rally in Saigon,” *The Times of India*, July 20, 1964; “Vietnamese Raid French War Statue: Damage Monument in Marking ‘National Day of Shame’” *The Sun*, July 20, 1964; “Đốt phá tòa Đại Sứ Pháp,” *Tự Do*, July 22, 1964;

<sup>65</sup> Much to the pleasure of the protesting students, the French memorial statue was eventually removed and was replaced with one honoring Vietnamese victory. It is reported that a statue of “Thần Chiến Thắng” or the wing statue of Nike of Samothrace was installed, as well as a removal of all French names from placards in the square (“Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Việt Nam Yêu cầu Chính Phủ: Quốc Hũ HÓA TÀI SẢN PHÁP và đoạn giao với chính phủ De Gaulle,” *Tự Do*, July 24, 1964; “Anh Em sinh viên đã hạ hẳng tượng đồng Pháp tại công trường Chiến Sĩ,” *Tự Do*, July 30, 1964). Students also convened meetings and discussions to review the legacy of French colonialism in Vietnam and condemned French colonialist policies of “ngu dân” (making the populace stupid) and “Chia ĐỂ Trị” (Divide and Conquer) (Sinh Viên Saigon Thảo Luận ‘chánh sách thực dân Pháp tại Việt Nam,’ *Tự Do*, Aug. 4, 1964).

<sup>66</sup> “Tuyên Cáo của Chánh Phủ VNCH,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 3, 1965; even then, some journalists like Thanh Huy called upon the administration to consult with the Vietnamese people regarding participation and stance on conferences. Clear statement on whether the Republic was going to participate or not is demanded. See “Đừng Đặt dân vào thế kẹt,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 30, 1965.

<sup>67</sup> “Phiên xử 21 bị can trọng vụ ‘Phong Trào Dân Tộc Tự Quyết’ và ‘Ủy Ban Hòa Bình,’” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 3, 1965; “Tòa án lại ‘sôi động’ và những phút chót,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 6, 1965.

<sup>68</sup> The three men—Tôn Thất Dương Ky, Dr. Phạm Văn Huyền, and journalist Cao Minh Chiêm—were originally to be “parachuted” off into North Vietnam (“Đọc Báo: Thả Dù 3 ông Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 17, 1965, org. cited in *Sống và Tiếng Vang*). However, the three “communist sympathizing peace activists” were simply deported across the Hiền Lương Bridge which divided Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel (Giữa tiếng la 6 nguyên rủa của đồng bào 3 trí thức bệnh hoạn lâm lũi qua cầu Bến Hải,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 22, 1965). Their departure from North Vietnam to France, see: “Các Lực Lượng Chống Cộng Bảo Động Việt Cộng Đã Suất cảng 3 ‘ông’ Hòa Bình qua Pháp,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 14, 1965.

newspapers and editorials lambasted the overtures from France,<sup>69</sup> the United Nations,<sup>70</sup> and even American diplomats<sup>71</sup> as either falling prey to schemes of international communism or misunderstanding the circumstances of the anticommunist war.<sup>72</sup>

Under the Thiệu-Kỳ administration, anti-neutralist discourse was redeployed to bolster the legitimacy and guide the policies of the new regime. An administration known for its militarism and hardlined anticommunism, one of the first acts of the Directorate was to cease relations with France. A move that had been vocally encouraged by various civilian components since the days of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, ending of diplomatic ties with France, on the one hand, marked the position that the Kỳ administration would have towards matters of “peace,” “negotiations, and neutralism. On the other hand, the move lends itself to the regime’s pledge to rebuild the anticommunist force of the nation and fulfill promises left unaccomplished by prior administrations. Deploying the long-established adage of “resoluteness,” the first study document distributed for the “Discussion Movement” justified the actions of the Directorate against France and made clear that the “standpoint” of the regime’s diplomatic policy would clearly differentiate between “friends” and “enemies.” Those who aided the Republic in their war against the communists will be embraced; those who went against the anticommunist direction of the Republic would be confronted.<sup>73</sup> As the 1965 Day of National Resentment rolled around, Kỳ appropriated the mantra of the “Northward March” to build support for his “National Front to Liberate the North.”<sup>74</sup> Deemed a “necessary measure” to ensure ultimate victory in study documents, the Kỳ administration argued that the project to “exterminate the communists” cannot be simply isolated to the South but must be one that militarily engaged the Communist North within its own territory.<sup>75</sup> Regurgitating much of the anticommunist positions since the

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<sup>69</sup> In July, amidst anti-neutralist protests by students, and renewed neutralization overtures by U Thant and De Gaulle, the regular international analysis in *Tự Do* calls U Thant a “dead pawn” *con bài chết* without any real power to determine the actions of the UN. Opposition to De Gaulle by students is hailed as evidence that “Vietnam continues to hold the initiative—in dealing with France” (“De Gaulle, U Thant, Ân, Mỹ và sinh viên Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964). Following the August riots, *Tự Do* called for unity, arguing that “the French Government is now happily clapping their hands.” Chaos were proving De Gaulle correct, the newspaper warned (“Nêu Chúng Tôi là Cộng Sản,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 30, 1964; In May: “Lại Một Trò Phấp,” *Tự Do*, May 5, 1965.

<sup>70</sup> “Phản ứng của Việt Nam về hội nghị Geneve Mới: ô Thant vượt qua quyền hạn mình khi muốn bán đứng Việt nam cho CS.” *Tự Do*, July 7, 1964;

<sup>71</sup> *Tự Do* once editorialized on Cabot Lodge’s tour of Europe in which he reportedly argued that Vietnam was not an issue that could singularly resolved. The newspaper argued that this could be interpreted as advocating for “international discussion”—conjoining the conflict in Vietnam with a host of other international issues. This, argued the newspaper, must be opposed because “the people of Vietnam do not want anyone to eclipse them in matters which concern Vietnam.” American support of Vietnam, the article continued, had led the Vietnamese people to believe that “America had fought for the right for self-determination in general, and thus America can never step on the self determination of Vietnam in particular” (“Ông Cabot Lodge có đặt sai vấn đề không?” *Tự Do*, Sep. 6, 1964).

<sup>72</sup> Calls for American retreat—both domestically and abroad—were interpreted as part of France’s neutralist schemes. “Thách thức và lẽ loi,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964.

<sup>73</sup> “Tài Liệu Học Tập: Tình Hình và Nhiệm Vụ Trong Giai Đoạn Mới,” TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*.

<sup>74</sup> Originally inaugurated by Kỳ in May (“Song song với việc thành lập MTQGGPMB, Thiếu Tướng Kỳ đề nghị,” *Chính Luận*, May 1, 1965);

<sup>75</sup> “Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng miền Nam, giải phóng miền Bắc,” dated 7/20/1965, BYT 3031; CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965; “Tuyên Ngôn của Chính Phủ Nhân ngày 20-7-1965,” PTTVNCH 29400: *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm “ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1965*; following the 1965 Day of National Resentment commemoration, the Kỳ administration

First Republic, study sessions emphasized the duplicity of communists in negotiating peace, and the “goodwill” of the Republic in enacting the provisions of the Geneva Accords. Any negotiations with the communists, thus, was rejected by the Kỳ administration which presented overtures for peace as a communist scheme to “seize dominance in the South, in hopes of capturing the state” and a trap to pressure the Republican state to accept ceasefire on communist terms.

*“Peace” and the 1967 Presidential Election*

One of the major discursive characteristics of the Interregnum had been the tightened conjunction between neutralism and communism. The repeated use of “communists, neutralists” *cộng sản trung lập* to vilify various segments of the Republic had transformed the image of the neutralist (those who were originally “on-the-fence,” politically indifferent) into a public enemy that was equated with communism. Alongside being deemed “communist sympathizers” by the Khánh administration, subsequent regimes had implemented various legal, censorship, and coercive measures to curb the influences of “peace movements,” and those who advocated for peace had been much maligned by a largely anticommunist public. While “neutralists” were expressly forbidden to run in the 1966 and 1967 elections,<sup>76</sup> at the dawn of the Second Republic, the conceptual linkage between peace and neutralism progressively shifted to shakier grounds. As the positions of civilian candidates during the 1967 Presidential election demonstrate, public conversations had, at least temporarily, delinked those advocating for peace and negotiations from their historically vilified label as “neutralists.”

The military-ticket of Thiệu and Kỳ—most favored to win in the 1967 Presidential election—began its campaign espousing the familiar adamancy of the military’s hardline position on the question of peace. Thiệu and Kỳ, however, faced a slew of powerful civilian candidates who, in one way or another, advocated for ceasefire, reconciliation, and negotiations—some even with the communist guerrillas. This shift in how peace and neutralism was nationally discussed came about due to key political transformations resulting from the intensification of the war, the stagnation of democratic reforms, and the growing American presence in South Vietnam. The crux of the matter were grievances against the military’s control over the affairs of society and widespread opposition to a militaristic resolution to the war. The war—as argued—cannot be won through military might alone, but rather the social, economic, and political policies that can address endemic domestic issues so that South Vietnam may be stabilized and can successfully wage that war. The military-led state’s push to expand the war rather than seek negotiation was seen as a political position that pointed to continued political dominance of the military. Upon this, peace proposals were the fulcrum around which that opposition to the military was waged; “peace”—as it was during the 1967 Presidential campaign—was a political weapon against military rule.

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reported a limited policy of infiltration and guerrilla warfare against North Vietnam with several teams being air dropped above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel (“South Developing Force in No. Viet Nam,” *Boston Globe*, Jul 25, 1965).

<sup>76</sup> Of the 10 points articulated by Dr. Phan Quang Đán (Chairman of National Political Conference) on 4-14-66 regarding the Constituent Assembly elections, point 4 made explicit that the committee must “prevent the involvement of communists and neutralists in the candidate registry.” This was, in large part, accepted by those involved (“Xây Dựng Dân Chủ: Tập 1” dated 5/12/1966, PTTVNCH 29577, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*). Various tickets for the 1967 Presidential election were rejected due to their “pro-Communist or pro-Neutralist” ties (Penniman, 57-58).



The crucial role of Buddhist political mobilization in affecting this shift must be noted. While the “Struggle Movement” was effectively crushed by the Kỳ administration by July 1966, the Buddhist-led uprising pulled thousands of supporters, including military officers and state administrators who defected and effectively cordoning off key cities in Central Vietnam from Saigon control during the height of the uprising. Faced with internal rebellion within its own ranks, the military administration of Thiệu and Kỳ sought to rebuild national unity through the “Greater Solidarity Campaign” *Chiến Dịch Đại Đoàn Kết* through re-education of defectors and reintegration of important state agents back into the governmental fold.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the monumental rebellion demanding civilian rule, democratic institutions, and peace also accelerated democratic transition which was stubbornly delayed since the return to military rule in 1965. Indeed, faced with a crisis of national legitimacy, the Directorate was forced to acquiesced to Buddhist demands by holding a “National Political Congress” on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April which ultimately mandated national elections to form a Constitutional Congress and the Directorate was forced to promise to relinquish its powers following the inauguration of a national assembly.<sup>78</sup> Allowed a legal and legitimate platform to plan and initiate elections, the “Congress” had initiated the process of democratic transition despite subsequent attempts by the Directorate to remain in power indefinitely. A successful Constituent Assembly election would be held just 5 months after the “Congress,” paving way for the completed draft of the Second Republican constitution in April the following year.

The prominence of Buddhist-led politics during the period ultimately reshaped the discussion surrounding peace. Adamantly opposed to foreign intervention, military rule, and the intensification of an already destructive war, these positions championed by Buddhists during the Struggle Movement were evidently reflected in the political platforms of civilian candidates during the 1967 Presidential election. Âu Trường Thanh, for example, was a professor who had quit the Kỳ administration in 1966 in protest of the regime’s “police state tactics.” In 1967, he submitted his candidacy for Presidency on a platform of immediate ceasefire and more open negotiations.<sup>79</sup> His campaign ran the slogan of “No more bombs” and his slate symbol was a bomb with a big “X” through it.<sup>80</sup> Although rejecting “peace at any price,” Thanh believed in working “through discussions within the new elected government and legislature” to arrive at a proposal for peace.<sup>81</sup> Thanh’s presidential bid, however, was quickly cut short after he was linked to a communist organization and his ticket was rejected by the Central Election Council. Other key civilian candidates like Trần Văn Hương (former Premier), Phan Khắc Sửu (former Head of State), and Trường Đình Dzu (the runner-up in the Presidential election) all had peace

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<sup>77</sup> CV 2942/UBĐHTLC/TƯ dated 7/3/1966, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm “Ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720. Directed by the Chiêu Hồi body, the political purpose of the “Greater Unity” stratagem was not merely encouraging the defection and reintegration of communist guerrillas into the Republican society, but also the “return” of those who were already part of the Republic to the values of the nation. This was particularly true to those who had joined with the “Struggle Movement” in the antigovernment uprising. Indicative of this, one of the primary ideals of the program was to “protect—harmonize—forgive misunderstands,” reconcile and “eliminate all thoughts of vengeance” which were blamed on colonialists and communists. While many of those who once joined the “Struggle Movement” would be pardoned by the formation of the Second Republic, the issue at hand for the South Vietnamese state was to propagate ideals that would prevent such upheavals from reoccurring.

<sup>78</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 125.

<sup>79</sup> “Peace Candidate Lays Smear Campaign to Kỳ,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1967.

<sup>80</sup> “South Vietnam Goes Political,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 8, 1967.

<sup>81</sup> “Vietnam Peace Candidate,” *Boston Globe*, July 7, 1967.

proposals that stood in opposition to the military-ticket's platform calling for escalation of the war.<sup>82</sup>

The flexibility afforded to discussions of “peace” and “negotiations” during this period, however, was not without limits. To avoid being labeled a neutralist, candidates articulated their commitments to anticommunist nationalism while simultaneously pushed for peace and negotiations. Trường Đình Dzu—the most vocal critic of military rule and came second in the Presidential race with 17% of the popular vote—pushed for a South Vietnamese position of peace arguing that as nationalists, the South Vietnamese should not avoid the issue of peace and allow “only the communists to talk about peace and opposition.” Like other candidates, Dzu avowed himself to the anticommunist nationalist cause, critiqued American presence, though he advocated for discussions with the NLF on the basis that they are seen as a domestic rebel group rather than a legitimate party in the war.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, reflecting broader angst to American presence in Vietnam and the growing concerns over South Vietnamese political autonomy, these candidates further indicated that the resolution of the war must be for the Vietnamese and by the Vietnamese. In expression of national self-determination, candidates turned from a critique of French “neutralist” designs for the region to the effects of American foreign policy. Although acknowledging the “necessity” of American troops in South Vietnam, Phan Khắc Sửu, for example, argued that Americans are like a “double-edged blade” used a doctor because, while American presence was positive for some issues in South Vietnam, Americans cannot “cure all of the disease.” Trần Văn Hương, similarly, emphasized Vietnamese political autonomy in his platform, arguing for the Vietnamese people's ability to determine their own future. For Hương, the influx of foreign troops (American included) had highlighted the progressive transition of the war away from the South Vietnamese hands and into the hands of their allies. Although Americans believe that they are “protecting freedom for Vietnam,” the reality was that American policy was “solely oriented towards the safeguarding Southeast Asia which in large part is determined in [what happens in] Vietnam.” For the former Premier, while American presence was necessary, the resolution of the conflict must be by the Vietnamese people themselves.<sup>84</sup> Both advocated for negotiations with Hà Nội to bring a peaceful resolution to the war, though rejected allowing the Southern guerrillas a seat at the table decrying the NLF as “a tool of the communists in the North.”

However, despite the ambiguity and flexibility surrounding peace and neutralism during the elections, the victory of the military-ticket in October of 1967 and the Tết Offensive just four months later paved way for the revival of the anticommunist adamancy seen in earlier periods of Republican history. Perhaps influenced by or in fear of the political ascension of their civilian opposition, the hardline position of Thiệu and Kỳ had greatly moderated as election day approaches. Indeed, early on, the military slate maintained a hardline position against negotiations and placed conditions of communist withdrawal prior to any consideration of peace talks during their campaign. Thiệu, in August, argued that to bring the war to an end, his government would “convince the Communists that they could in no way inflict a defeat on South

<sup>82</sup> “2 South Viet Candidates Ask Peace Talks with Viet Cong,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 4, 1967.

<sup>83</sup> “Ứng cử viên Trương Đình Dzu ‘tả xông hữu đột’ suốt 2 giờ trong cuộc đấu võ mồm với báo chí,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 8, 1967.

<sup>84</sup> “2 Liên Danh Sửu-Đán, Hương-Truyền ‘xuất quân’ ra mắt báo chí thủ đô,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 5, 1967; “11 liên danh tiếp xúc cử tri tại Biên Hòa, vắng mặt 2 tướng Thiệu-Kỳ, có ông Võ Văn Cử đại diện,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 18, 1967.

Vietnam.” To do so, Thiệu promised the intensification of the war effort to force the communists into a plea for peace.<sup>85</sup> By mid-August, however, Thiệu shifted from non-negotiations towards promising that he would request “to have a meeting to talk about negotiated settlement” if elected President. He further promised to pause regular bombing of North Vietnam for a week as a “symbolic gesture.”<sup>86</sup> By the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, Thiệu declared his willingness to talk to the communist guerrillas “any place, any time”—a position that even moderate candidates were unwilling to broach—though he later clarified that such “talks” would only be informal.<sup>87</sup>

This moderation was short-lived. Indeed, the period that followed the 1967 Presidential elections would be marked with intensified attempts by the state to consolidate political authority as well as monopolize the ideological discourse. The Tết Offensive—coming just three months after the inauguration of the Thiệu Presidency—reinforced these trends as the catastrophe of war reached urban centers. While the Tết Offensive would initiate the long-desired talks between the Washington, Saigon, and Hà Nội, it also initiated a non-exempt draft policy pulling once deferred students and faculty into the military. Pacification, psychological warfare, and indoctrination programs would be expanded, revamped, and escalated, resulting in the formation of the “General Information Program” in 1970.

### *Anti-Neutrality during the Second Republic*

The General Information Program, as discussed in Chapter 2, was an initiative of the Thiệu Presidency to revamp, sophisticate, and expand the existing information apparatus. In large part a response to the Tết Offensive, the new information policies were designed to provide greater propagandistic reach, regularize and standardize political study, and extend the control of the central government. Through this renovated informational system, the Thiệu regime propagated its message of “peace through strength,” a position that reflected the military’s hardline policy when it came to matters of negotiations.

The study document “Why There Is Not Yet Peace,” distributed a month after the first wave of the Tết Offensive, reiterated the position that cessation of communist infiltration is a precondition for peace talks. Peace, although desired by the Republic, is not automatic and the process towards peace cannot ignore the deceptiveness of communists who advocate for peace while conducting war. As argued, “in reality, the call for peace is naught but a strategy to hide the infiltration of the communists.” The path towards peace, as articulated, was through the defeat of the communists guerrillas, forcing Hà Nội to realize that “they must pay too high of a price for their infiltration within a war that they cannot win.” Peace, thus, must come through strength and martial defeat of the enemy—a position that spelled the intensification of the war effort rather than de-escalation of conflict.

Within this framework of “peace,” the regime reasserted familiar anti-neutralist arguments. The political study of a speech delivered by Premier Nguyễn Văn Lộc in April of 1968, for example, explicates the “resolute standpoint of our government and people” regarding communism. As argued, the Republic is determined to “not give up a single inch of land” to the communists and rejected the communist guerrillas as legitimate party to any peace talks. As for

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<sup>85</sup> “3 Viet Candidates Offer Divergent Peace Plans: Thieu, Huong, Suu Open Drives to Win September Presidential Election,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 4, 1967.

<sup>86</sup> “Thieu Tells his plans for peace,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 12, 1967.

<sup>87</sup> “Thieu ‘willing’ to negotiate with Viet Cong ‘Any Time,’” *The Sun*, Aug. 28, 1967.

its people, The Republican citizenry must not “accept a surrender to the communists,” must not beg for peace, and must be prepared to sacrifice for the protection of the nation and the final victory.

More indicative of the revival of anticommunist adamancy, a 1970 study document explicates why “we must oppose communism to the end.” Characteristic of the embedded Republican discourse on anti-neutralism, the document decries those who advocate for “peace and neutralism, reconciliation and collaboration” *hòa bình trung lập, hòa giải liên hiệp* as those who “unknowingly or purposefully...joined hands with the communists.” These individuals had “bounded themselves to reasons of peace and democracy to deter the progress of our army and people through activities of disruption and distortion.” Equated to communist sympathizers, the piece retorts against such sentiments by reiterating the rationale for the anticommunist war, ideological adamancy, and the necessity of military victory for the survival of the nation. Reiterating the inhumane, atheistic caricatures of communists, the piece outlines the necessary steps for final victory. Alongside national economic development and a strong military, the piece made clear, like the First Republic, that citizens must “make resolute their thoughts meaning determinately oppose communism, not nourish the dream of peace through collaboration...[and] not engage in any activities harming national order and the anticommunist ideal.”<sup>88</sup>

While decisive adamancy against communism surged in the regime’s rhetoric and policies, anti-neutralism was most illustratively utilized to combat growing calls for “coalition government” by foreign and domestic peace advocates. Blamed as an initiative of a “third force” that was sympathetic to the communist cause, advocates for shared governmental representation for communists in South Vietnam was decried as a form of “collaboration” with the enemy. The idea for a coalition interim administration to pave the way for a ceasefire and a resolution to the war was not new at the start of the Second Republic. As early as March of 1967—more than a year before the Paris talks actually began—Hà Nội had advocated for the NLF to play some role in the administration in the South through a coalition government. This of course, had been flatly rejected by Kỳ.<sup>89</sup> The topic reappeared during the peace talks upon which the America and the Republican administration worked to prevent communist presence in any future administration in the South.<sup>90</sup>

Perceived as a real possibility, the Thiệu administration cracked down on advocates for a “coalition government,” including his former opposition Trường Đình Dzu.<sup>91</sup> In July 1968, 10 leaders from a peace organization advocating for the proposal were sentenced to death on the charge of “attempting to operate for the communists under the false name of peace and neutrality.”<sup>92</sup> A perpetual issue, the issue became magnified as “coalition government” was one of the main propositions delivered articulated in the NLF’s 1969 Ten-Point Plan at the talks in Paris.<sup>93</sup> Even worse for anti-neutralist prospects, as the Paris talks neared its conclusion, the United States slid closer to the communist position, jointly proposing with Hà Nội a “National Council of Reconciliation” composed of equal representation from the Republican government,

<sup>88</sup> “Tại Sao Ta Phải Chống Cộng Đến Kỳ Cùng” attached to CV 4384/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 11/13/1970, PTTVNCH 32656, *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*.

<sup>89</sup> “As We See It: Letters Help to Cancel Hope for Vietnam Peace,” *Detroit Free Press*, Mar. 23, 1967.

<sup>90</sup> “Saigon Generals are Our Primary Obstacle to Peace,” *The Washington Post*, Mar. 30, 1969.

<sup>91</sup> “Triangular Talk in Saigon,” *The Guardian*, Jul 13, 1968.

<sup>92</sup> “10 In New Alliance Doomed by Saigon,” *New York Times*, Jul 13, 1968.

<sup>93</sup> “Text of the Vietcong’s 10-Point Proposal in Paris,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1969.

the communist guerrillas, and a “third force” of neutral parties.<sup>94</sup> Faced with a perceived betrayal by his American ally, Thiệu fiercely condemned the move by the United States, arguing that the Republic would not be bound to an agreement it did not sign.<sup>95</sup> His speech in October of 1972 directly addressed the proposal, setting the tone for the study document calling for vigilance and warning of a communist offensive amidst a ceasefire.<sup>96</sup> The “Council,” rid of its “administrative” function in the final draft of the Peace Accords, is seen as a major victory for the Thiệu administration in its opposition to “coalition government.”<sup>97</sup>

In state messaging, the rationale for opposing a “coalition government” relied heavily on a well-established narrative of anti-neutralism and “resoluteness” against communism. Indeed, immediately following the Tết Offensive, Nguyễn Văn Lộc had argued that “collaboration with the communist is suicide.” Given the history of communist duplicity and aggression, such a government would ultimately spell the complete seizure of state power by communist forces and the extermination of nationalist components in South Vietnam. Painted as advocates of neutralism, Thiệu in May promised “strong measures” against peace movements, those advocating for joint government, or those “collaborating” with the communist guerrillas. For the Thiệu administration, neutralism was an impossibility in Vietnam and its enduring war against the communist North. In speeches delivered early January 1970, Thiệu positioned South Vietnam as a “gateway” into Asia, arguing that control over the region is a decisive factor in the Cold War and South Vietnam stands as the primary outpost in the global war against communism. Such a position prevents South Vietnam from adopting a “neutral” foreign policy. Moreover, regurgitating the positions of preceding regimes, the Thiệu Presidency argues that North Vietnam was not neutral and international communism prevents a “truly neutral position” in its ambition to dominate South Vietnam and all of Indochina. Neutralism and the advocacy of peace, thus, was simply a phase of the broader communist strategy for global domination.

These messages were disseminated and elaborated in study documents. A 1969 study document made clear that “the people of the South would rather fight until their last breath than accept a joint government with the communists.” Depicting neutralists and peace advocates as “the minority of people due to naivete do not yet know the communists or because of a defeatist or pacifists attitude,” the piece reiterates long held notions that providing the communists with any leeway would be disastrous for the fate of the nation. Communism, as described, is an inhumane ideological platform that justified the killing, assassination, and terrorism against civilian population. Far from a neutral actor, the communists in the North were servants of international communism whose “policy of infiltrating the South is seen as duty” to their overlords. Citing texts produced by the communists themselves, the piece articulates the long-term stratagem of infiltration and the impossibility of resolving the conflict politically. As argued, although this policy of infiltration has in large part failed, the communist had deployed other methods particularly propaganda, mass mobilization, and psychological warfare in hopes of overthrowing the Republican state. Given these designs, “collaboration with the communists

<sup>94</sup> “Peace ‘Within Reach,’ US Says; Hanoi Discloses Nine-Point Plan,” Oct. 27, 1972.

<sup>95</sup> “Saigon: US-Hanoi Accord Won’t Bind South: Thieu Says Pact Can’t Bind South,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 28, 1972;

<sup>96</sup> “Bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa với đồng bào các giới trên hệ thống truyền thanh và truyền hình ngày 24-10-1972” attached to CV 3251/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 10/26/1972, PTTVNCH 30917: *Tài liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về thông điệp và các bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống năm 1972*;

<sup>97</sup> “Agreement vague on the future of South Vietnam,” *The Irish Times*, Jan 25, 1973.

today is to die tomorrow.” Harkening to various disastrous experiments of “living with the communists,” the piece argues that joint government or neutrality was an impossibility, counter to known historical experiences and reason. Moreover, the piece reifies the historical “duty” of South Vietnam in preventing the “wave” of communism from invading the Free World—a duty likened to Vietnam’s mythological history of resisting foreign invasion. Indeed, at its conclusion, the piece argues that “history has presented us with this mission; we cannot deny it [and] all we can do is to courageously fight until the final victory.”<sup>98</sup> In other study documents, advocates for “cooperation” were condemned as those who “lives in the Nation but dream of communism”—essentially communist sympathizers or sleeper agents<sup>99</sup>—while emphasizing the national duty of the administrative personnel to remain “resolute,” be ideological leaders, and combat propaganda for a “coalition government.”<sup>100</sup>

The rejection of “coalition government” and anticommunist “resoluteness” was also utilized to frame a number of other related issues. Study documents on the Phoenix Program, for example, called Republican citizens to aid counter-guerrilla efforts and combat the communist People’s War. An expression of anticommunist vigilance, civilians, on the one hand, are called upon to publicly denounce or report on those who were secretly guerrillas, providing intelligence on any communist movements, and locating hidden guerrilla weapon cache. On the other hand, civilians were also to serve as ideological guardians of their community by instructing their children and family members to reject proposals for “immediate peace” and “joint government,” being wary of strangers, participating in Civil Defense activities, and attending locally held political study sessions.

Moreover, study materials of PGBM was also reframed to cope with the heightened tensions experienced during the Second Republic. The envisioned mass participation of civilian, military, and administrative efforts in initiatives like the Phoenix Program redefined the scope that came with “safeguarding” state activities from communist penetration. Indeed, a study material dwelling on PGBM in 1971 argues that the communist’s strategy is “total war,” deploying a host of methods ranging from “terrorism, assassination, kidnapping” to “protests, meetings, discussions, pamphlets, posters” to manipulation of the press and infiltration of state bodies. Similar to the First Republic, solution to combat communist activities emphasized the rectification of “thoughts” and persistent vigilance. As argued, “everyone must re-situate themselves within the anticommunist mission, arming themselves with a firm belief in the anticommunist cause and the final victory of the people.” This meant that “a cadre of the Health Ministry, a cadre of Rural Reconstruction... cannot be justified for only performing their specialized duties” but rather must situate those duties in the broader aims of the anticommunist effort and voluntarily engage in national defense initiatives, such participating in the Civil Defense forces. Ideologically, the piece emphasized that everyone must understand that

<sup>98</sup> Không liên hiệp với cộng sản" in NVKQG 299, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Nha Giám Đốc Văn Khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia, các đơn vị trực thuộc nha về học tập chính trị năm 1969* ; directive for political study, see 2958/UBCDHTU/TU dated 7/30/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>99</sup> Full text, see study material entitled "Không liên hiệp với cộng sản" in NVKQG 299, *Tài Liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Nha Giám Đốc Văn Khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia, các đơn vị trực thuộc nha về học tập chính trị năm 1969* ; directive for political study, see 2958/UBCDHTU/TU dated 7/30/1969, PTTVNCH 30273: *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*.

<sup>100</sup> “TÌNH HÌNH VÀ NHIỆM VỤ TRONG GIAI ĐOẠN HIỆN TẠI” attached to 2064/BTT/NHK/NCKH/HT dated 12/26/1969, PTTĐIICH 7747: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin năm 1968-1970*

“peace...for the communists is but a temporary resting point to later expand war more aggressively.” Within governmental organs, alongside careful organization and preservation of sensitive materials, measures also dictated regular monitoring of state workers, narrowing channels of communication with external bodies, and reviewing the dossiers of civil servants. Within hamlets and villages, the document suggested inspection of all who enter or exit, mass political education, and “regular monitoring of families with members who joined the communists.”<sup>101</sup>

In the aftermath of the Paris signings, the usage of “coalition government” and “neutralism” were less apparent in study documents as concern shifted to the negotiations in La Celle Saint Cloud, prisoner exchanges, and the enactment of ceasefire provisions laid out in the Paris Accords. Nevertheless, vigilance against communist propaganda and hardline positions against communist suggestions and demands remained a core theme of study documents and state messaging. This adamancy greatly influenced the approach of the Republican administration in negotiations with the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam (PRG)—the NLF’s representative structure formed in 1969 to engage in negotiations—at talks in La Celle Saint Cloud beginning in April 1973. Quickly broken down, the two sides were to come together to determine the political direction of the country, but “meetings have been devoted to charges and counter charges over the continued fighting in Vietnam.”<sup>102</sup>

While study documents relating to the La Celle Saint Cloud presented the Republican administration as filled with “good will” and its proposals “constructive” as opposed to the “aimless proposals” of the communists,<sup>103</sup> the approach that the Republic took towards negotiations reflected their longstanding “resoluteness” against communism. A study document distributed in October 1973 relies on C. Turner Joy’s 1970 *How Communists Negotiate* to outline the necessary precautions and tactics to be deployed during negotiations. As dictated, pressure on the communists must never be let up when negotiating and all modes of conflict (“military, political, economic, psychological, outside of conferences”) must be seen as potential weapons that can provide advantage. Tactical suggestions from matters of process (such as preventing the enemy from determining location of discussions, the order to which specific issues are discussed, and maintaining tight schedules) to careful vigilance regarding new development, proposals, and decisions to ensure that nothing is granted to the enemy.

This hardball approach to negotiations aligns to long-standing caricaturization of the communist enemy, depicted as master of deception, distortion, and psychological warfare. Indeed, a study document on the PRG distributed around the same period argues that peace was not something that the communists sought. Rather, violations of both the Geneva and Paris Accords highlight the fact that “Hà Nội has not yet abandoned their dream of colonizing South Vietnam through force.” Moreover, the PRG—the counterpart to the Republican administration in ongoing negotiations—is decried as an illegitimate entity without territorial sovereignty or popular support, unrecognized by any international body and the Republic of Vietnam.

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<sup>101</sup> “Phòng Gian Bảo Mật,” atch. To CV 386/BTT/CTTL/HT dated 2/5/1971, PTTVNCH 32656, *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975*.

<sup>102</sup> “Vietcong Say They are Quitting Paris Talks With Saigon Team,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1974.

<sup>103</sup> “nhận định của phái đoàn VNCH tham dự hội nghị La Celle Saint Cloud về đề nghị 6 điểm ngày 22.03.74 của phía cộng sản,” PTTVNCH 31568, *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975*.

Inevitably, the two-sides condemned each other for violations of signed treaties as fighting once again erupted in South Vietnam.

### *Conclusion*

In 1968, Thiệu had promised to crackdown on those advocating for either. In 1971, he presented his “Four No’s standpoint,” which rejected coalition government and a neutralist South Vietnam, as well as not surrendering territory to the communists and not allowing communists freedom of activity in the South.<sup>104</sup> In October 1972, as the Paris talks neared its conclusion, Thiệu had railed against “coalition government” and called upon his citizenry to remain adamant and “resolute” before the communist threat.<sup>105</sup> Once the Accords were signed, Thiệu had famously said, “Do not believe in what the Communists say but look at what the Communists do.”<sup>106</sup> And in his resignation speech in April 1975, Thiệu, again, expressed his opposition to a coalition government, believing that such a measure “would lead to the fall of the country to the communists.”<sup>107</sup>

If this brief outline of Thiệu’s ideological positions articulates anything, it is the consistent anticommunist “resoluteness” and opposition to “coalition government” that had been a staple of his Presidency. These positions which guided the domestic and foreign policies of the Second Republic, were far from novel and new and are instead derivative reutilization of the anti-neutralist narrative originally outlined by the CDTC in 1955. Indeed, not unique to the Thiệu Presidency, anti-neutralism was deployed across the Republican era, and this utilization and reutilization embedded rationales and predictions of the disaster that neutralism would bring to South Vietnam, and ingrained caricatures and depictions of who neutralists are and their projected affiliation with communism. By the Second Republic, the idea that to combat communism, the Republic and its citizens must be “resolute”—both in thoughts and in actions—or that neutralism is simply a stage in the communist’s strategy for domination or that neutralists were either communist sympathizers or horrifically naïve of the realities of communism were familiar political mantras manifesting across a spectrum of state messaging and political speech. Akin to the narrative on the Geneva Accords, these depictions had been normalized through time and the anti-neutralism had become an embedded element of the political culture in the South.

In explaining the survival of this narrative across some 20-odd years of Republican history, coercive policies, military, and legal measures clearly played a role in maintaining the salience of anti-neutralist terminologies, concepts, and language. Unlike the Geneva Narrative which remained relatively stable throughout the Republican era, the Republican narrative on neutralism saw ebbs and flows as certain aspects of the narrative were made obsolete at certain historical junctures. Indeed, not only did anti-neutralism face perpetual challenges from the Buddhist-led political mobilization and the various peace organizations, the orthodox narrative faced its fiercest contest amidst the decisive Presidential Election of 1967. However, in the wake of the Tết Offensive, the original adamancy and “resoluteness” of the narrative resurfaced as the

<sup>104</sup> “TẠI SAO CHÚNG TA CHỦ TRƯỞNG 4 KHÔNG,” attached to CV 2601/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 8/18/1971, BYT 3031, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*.

<sup>105</sup> “Bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa với đồng bào các giới trên hệ thống truyền thanh và truyền hình ngày 24-10-1972” attached to CV 3251/BTT/UBTTĐC/TU dated 10/26/1972, PTTVNCH 30917: *Tài liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về thông điệp và các bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống năm 1972*;

<sup>106</sup> “Rumors Rife Across Country: South Vietnam Tries to Suppress Tales,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 9, 1975.

<sup>107</sup> “Text of Resignation Speech,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 22, 1975.



Thiệu Presidency implemented harsh and restrictive measures against peace advocates and champions of “coalition government” and ultimately crushed alternative conceptions from the public discourse.

While coercion and the resolution of power conflicts were essential factors in determining the perpetuation of the anti-neutralist narrative, its survival would be impossible without the continuous usage of the narrative by diverse Republican actors—both state and society—particularly after the collapse of the First Republic. Once a novel concept, the narrative has survived as a taken-for-granted repository of political arguments and beliefs, projected as a historically validated truth and fundamentally shaping the activities and policies seen across the history of the Republican South. Once a framework for justifying a “resolute standpoint,” the narrative had evolved to encompass a “domino”-like theory of subsequent “neutralization” if Laos was to be lost. During the Interregnum, the narrative transformed into a notion of self-determination in opposition to the overtures of France’s De Gaulle, and eventually integrating and validating certain demands for peace and negotiation. Its potency during the Second Republic aided the Thiệu administration in articulating the position the Republic took at the conference table in Paris, and its hardline stance at La Celle Saint Cloud. Through the historical course of this discursive evolution, ideological mantras (such as the political manipulation of communists regarding “peace,” the linkage between “peace” and “neutrality,” or the inevitability of communist takeover if the nation succumbed to neutralism) were regularly invoked and became fundamental aspects of Republican political thinking.

While “neutralism” would no longer be a widely utilized term in Vietnamese American political discourse, the hardline adamancy for which was advocated in Republican political philosophy continues to be evident. Communist proposals for “peace” and “reconciliation” are continually viewed with suspicion. At least during the formative period of the refugee community, the absoluteness of an anticommunist “standpoint” continued to be stressed and coercively enforced as exiles mobilized for support to retake the homeland. In more recent years, legal measures had been promoted by Vietnamese Americans to safeguard the community from communist influences, including officially deeming certain areas of Southern California “No-Communist Zones,” and preventing communist-affiliates from running for office or visiting Vietnamese American communities.

CHAPTER 5: VIETNAMESE UNDERDEVELOPMENT

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Republic, Ngô Đình Diệm delivered a speech that would set a foundational ideological precedent for the remainder of the First Republic. In that speech, Diệm depicted the revolutionary work in South Vietnam as not simply a task of “building the country” *kiến quốc* or “saving the country” *cứu quốc* as he had previously done, but rather Diệm emphasized the “deficient conditions of underdevelopment” faced by the Republic and the need for the South Vietnamese nation to “surpass” these conditions.<sup>1</sup> Characteristic of the Republican Personalism, the revolution must begin within the minds of individuals. The President called upon his citizens to “acknowledge these complex realities [and] be determined to progress forward.” Only from this acknowledgement can one appreciate the necessary “sacrifices” that each individual must make to “bring the country from an embryonic economic status towards a progressive society that does not need to surrender itself to the violent Communist regime.”<sup>2</sup> For South Vietnam, the issue of underdevelopment was a problem made imperative due to the communist threat.

This 1958 National Day address by the President followed key reconfigurations occurring in the PSP. In September of 1958, the regime implemented reforms which transferred structural leadership of the PSP from the Ministry of Information to the Office of the President. Emphasized in the new outline for the Program were matters relating to internationalism, American aid, geopolitics, and the socio-economic policies of the Republican state. Speeches from the President—particularly the addresses on National Day and the annual speech to the National Assembly—were made mandatory topics of study. For the remainder of 1958, 12 study materials were distributed which included 3 on speeches from the President, 2 documents dealing with international politics, a document exploring the significance of National Day, a document for the study of the International Declaration of Human Rights, and the remaining 4 documents repeated ideological imperatives of the CDTC.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Terminologically, this was the first public first usage of “underdevelopment” by the President. The previous speech given in Double Seven Day on July 7<sup>th</sup> of 1958 make no mention of the issue though emphasizing the project to “revolutionize and build the country,” “return” to Vietnam “full political and economic power” and liberate the person “spiritually as well as materially.” The issue of “underdevelopment” is best understood as a paradigm to rearticulate the already established ideals of the Republic.

<sup>2</sup> “Lễ Quốc Khánh, ngày 26-10-58, Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống,” *Saigon Mới*, 10.27.1958.

<sup>3</sup> A total of 13 documents were utilized for PSP sessions after the reconfiguration. They are listed as follows: 1) “Vấn Đề Học Tập” which details PSP reconfigurations and new operating manual, 2) “Phòng Gian Bảo Mật,” 3) “Tinh Thần Bất Khuất của Dân Tộc Việt Nam Qua hai cuộc chống xâm lăng của Đức Trần Hưng Đạo và Lê Thái Tổ,” 4) “Huấn Từ của Tổng Thống Nhân dịp phát giải thưởng văn chương 1957 và thông điệp của Tổng Thống nhân lễ Khánh Đản Đức Khổng Tử,” 5) “Thông điệp của Tổng Thống đọc trước Quốc Hội ngày 6.10.1958 nhân dịp khai mạc thường niên của Quốc Hội,” 6) “Lịch Sử ngày 26 tháng 10,” 7) “Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống Nhân Lễ Quốc Khánh ngày 26/10/58,” 8) “Vấn Đề Đài Loan/Tình hình tại eo biển Đài Loan,” 9) “Vì Sao Việt Nam nhìn nhận Cộng Hòa Irak,” 10) Việt Cộng Đòi Tăng Cường Sự Lãnh Đạo của Đảng Đối Với Nhà Nước,” 11) “Trước Âm Mưu Lũng Đòn Kinh Tế của Cộng Sản, Thế Giới Tự Do phải đối phó thế nào?” 12) “Học Tập Bản Tuyên Ngôn Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền,” 13) “Tại Sao Phải Trở Về Đạo Lý?” Document 11, in particular, distributed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December utilized the paradigm of “underdevelopment” to explore how developing countries were exceptionally affected by communist strategies to infiltrate and disrupt economic activities. This discussion was followed by commentary on the political and economic activities of leading countries in the Free World. These 13 documents can be found in Folder No. 20030, PTTĐỊCH, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập Thời Sự, Công Dân Giáo Dục, Chuyên môn, văn hóa tại Bộ Kinh Tế năm 1958*; Folder No. 26, NVKQG, *Nha Văn Khố Quốc Gia Phòng HC và KT, Lập Tài Liệu của Bộ QGGD, UBLĐ Học Tập TƯ về Học Tập Chính Trị Năm 1958*; Folder No. 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Năm 1958-1974*.

Elaboration of what Vietnamese underdevelopment actually entailed and the full articulation of the importance of the matter was not evident in PSP sessions until the start of 1959.<sup>4</sup> That year, the political study curriculum began with “The Present Realities of Vietnam.” Laying out the fundamentals of the narrative, the piece reemphasized the ideological emphases in Diệm’s 1958 National Day Speech, arguing the “actualization” of Government policies must necessarily begin with “acknowledg[ing] the realities in which these policies will be implemented, meaning we must first know what are the realities of Vietnam confronts in the present day.” A task not isolated to the national leader leadership (who must gauge the practicality of policies), the general population, too, must be made aware of the rationale behind the political and economic policies of the Republic, and modify their expectations given the opportunities and limitations of the country.<sup>5</sup>

In the text, Vietnam is categorized as an “underdeveloped country” alongside other Asian (with the exception of Japan), African, and Latin American countries. Unsurprisingly reflecting the contemporary “Modernization Theory” in American foreign policy and academe,<sup>6</sup> “underdevelopment” in South Vietnam is defined as pertaining to those countries which are “slow to progress in terms of economy, technology, and society: the majority of these countries are economically rural, using archaic agricultural technology which relies heavily on climatic patterns.” These countries also lack “capital, machinery, technical experts, and technological experience.” Their society is characterized by a low level of political activity, poor education, and deficient health standards. Unlike the views held by their Western benefactors, however, underdevelopment as defined by the Republic was not solely a socio-economic matter. It was, in part, a psychological one. Faced with their deficiencies vis-à-vis the developed countries of the West, the people of underdeveloped countries are “sad and ashamed” [*buồn tủi*] and “desire to quickly escape this condition.”

Embedding anticommunist values into the new ideological framework, the piece argues that underdeveloped countries are often easily duped by the promise of a “communist heaven,” propagandized by an adversary who exploit the psychological complex and socio-economic conditions of underdevelopment to spread influence in hopes of domination.<sup>7</sup> Vietnam’s geopolitical circumstances, however, sets it apart from other underdeveloped state and makes its “condition” far more severe. Because the country is divided into two, the economic potentials of Vietnam—both in terms of resources and human labor—are curtailed. Communist terrorist activities, in this light, is an imperative concern, exponentializing the developmental challenges

<sup>4</sup> The study of National Day in October of 1958 only marginally mentioned the issue of underdevelopment. The sixth study document handed out after the 1958 reconfiguration, entitled “History of the 26<sup>th</sup> of October,” was used in conjunction with the President’s speech. Although addressing the question of the “why the Vietnamese nation is placed in such an impoverished condition,” the document described not the conditions of Vietnam in 1958, but rather the immediate circumstances of the nation following the overthrow of Bảo Đại (“Lịch Sử Ngày 26 Tháng 10” attachment to CV số 12351/BKT/HT dated 10.15.1958, Folder No. 20030, PTTĐỊCH, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập Thời Sự, Công Dân Giáo Dục, Chuyên môn, văn hóa tại Bộ Kinh Tế năm 1958*).

<sup>5</sup> “Tài Liệu Số 1/59: Thực Trạng Của Việt Nam Hiện Nay” dated 1.26.1959, Folder No. 20186, Tài Liệu của UB Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TƯ v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị các tài liệu số 1/59, 2/59, 5/59, 6/59 năm 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Zaheer Baber, “Modernization Theory and the Cold War,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 31, no.1 (2001), 71-85.

<sup>7</sup> “Tại các nước kém mở mang, dân chúng buồn tủi và muốn chống ra khỏi tình trạng ấy. Vì vậy, dân chúng rất dễ bị Cộng Sản lợi dụng tâm trạng ấy, tuyên truyền “thiên đường cộng sản,” xúi dục chống đối lại chính quyền Quốc gia.... Những sự chống đối chính quyền quốc gia làm thêm chầm trễ sự xây dựng đất nước để ra khỏi tình trạng kém mở mang” (Ibid).

of underdevelopment and national division.<sup>8</sup> Bridging aspects of the Geneva narrative, the framework of Vietnamese Underdevelopment highlighted the communist's role in the division of the country, and blamed any developmental delays experienced on the threat to national security posed by the communist guerrillas.

Indeed, more than a guide for national progress, the issue of “underdevelopment” was a means to legitimize Republican rule. While “technologization” of the South Vietnamese economy and democratic progress were promised on the horizon, study documents also defended any shortcomings of the state and argued that citizens should not “ask for things that go beyond the realistic capability of the government.” Republican citizens should not reject domestic goods, demand international tourism, carelessly utilize their democratic freedoms, or ask for rights and privileges that are characteristic of Western polities. Succinctly, “because we are of impoverished, deficient, and threatened conditions, we must think according to [these conditions]; to ask for things relevant to conditions of wealth, excess or guarantee of security, we will fail dearly.”<sup>9</sup> To quickly “escape” the condition of underdevelopment, the solution was not to rely on external or international aid. Rather, the Republic must rely on itself by changing the way that it produces goods, it must be sparing in its expenses, and limit the elements brought about by colonialism, feudalism, and communism. It must protect itself from traitors and corruption, develop a “spirit of solidarity,” and unify the activities of government, military, and people.<sup>10</sup>

“Underdevelopment,” ultimately, was a way for the Republic to demand sacrifice by depicting a universal condition of impoverishment and deficiency that affected all Vietnamese regardless of societal class or rank. It is in that poverty that the people of the Republic must learn to care for the collective good and loyally contribute to the endeavors of the state. It was an emotionally laden image that painted Vietnam as geographically small and economically poor, psychologically anguished by the inferiority and insecurity it faces vis-à-vis a developed and wealthy world. The South Vietnamese conception of “underdevelopment” is characterized by the acceptance of this impoverishment, and the desire to collectively better their place within that world. “Underdevelopment” was a circumstance that must be “surpassed” [ra khỏi] or “escaped

<sup>8</sup> “So với các nước kém mở mang ấy thì Việt Nam lại còn ở trong những hoàn cảnh chính trị và địa lý khó khăn hơn nhiều: lãnh thổ Việt Nam bị chia hai, nên lực lượng vì vậy mà không được toàn vẹn, nhân tâm vì vậy mà bị phân tán. Ngay trong vùng tự do, chúng ta bị Cộng Sản lợi dụng tình trạng ấy để lũng đoạn gây chia rẽ nội bộ, phá hoại những công tác cải tiến dân sinh, phát triển kinh tế, mặc dầu phá hoại như thế là làm tổn hại đến quyền lợi chung của nhân dân. Vì thế trên trường quốc tế, Việt Nam gặp nhiều khó khăn hơn các nước kém mở mang khác.... tuy rằng dân số của chúng ta đông hơn, tài nguyên của chúng ta phong phú hơn, người chúng ta cần mẫn hơn; như thế chỉ vì các nước ấy không bị Cộng Sản chiếm giữ một phần lãnh thổ như ở nước chúng ta” (Ibid).

<sup>9</sup> “Nói một cách cụ thể, nom na là ta ở hoàn cảnh nghèo, thiếu thốn và bị đe dọa, thì phải tính theo chuyện nghèo, thiếu thốn và bị đe dọa xâm lăng; nếu học đòi theo các hoàn cảnh giàu có, dư dả hay có bản đảm an toàn thì chắc chắn là sẽ bị thất bại chua cay” (Ibid). Details on the various development-specific policies adopted by the Republican state are given in later assigned documents: Document 2/59 “Đường Lối Phát Triển của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam” (The Path of Development of the Republic of Vietnam) and 5/59 “Technologicalization” (Kỹ Nghệ Hóa).

<sup>10</sup> “Muốn sớm ra khỏi tình trạng kinh tế kém mở mang, không có phép lạ nào cả, cũng không phải ý lại vào ngoại nhân ngoại quốc nào cả: chỉ là một cách là mọi người cố gắng thực hiện chính sách kế hoạch để chóng ra khỏi tình trạng thấp kém. Thống nhất ý chí và hành động thì kế quả mau chóng. Nếu sửa đổi lề lối làm việc thì tăng năng suất, tiết kiệm tài nguyên, hàn gắn những sự phân cách đã sanh ra bởi Phong Thục Cộng giữa người công chức cán bộ với nhân dân. Phòng gian bảo mật, đề phòng mọi âm mưu ly gián, gây tinh thần thương thân thương ái, đoàn kết dân quân chính giữa các ngành các cấp, thì phá được mưu của bọn phá hoại tay sai của những bọn đầu cơ chính trị dựa vào ngoại bang” (ibid).

from” [thoát khỏi], and “escape” was not to be an individual endeavor but rather a collective and national one. Moreover, the matter was urgent. The path to development must be the “quickest” *mau chóng nhất* and the “most reasonable” *hợp lý nhất*. As argued, “people of Vietnam had suffered, been humiliated, and destitute for far too long...[and] cannot accept a...path of development too laggard.”<sup>11</sup>

Historically proffered were two existing “paths” to escape underdevelopment: communism and capitalism. Rather than actual solutions, these “paths” were criticized in study documents, presented as unadapted to the historical conditions of South Vietnam. Communism was rejected on moralistic grounds and the particular “experience” that Vietnam had with the “communist path of development.” As argued, as a path of development, communism has largely been discredited. Communism has failed to raise the standards of life for people in communist countries. Communism came to power only through a violent capture of state power and communist parties were often militarily supported by international communist forces. As one study document argued, “there is not a single country that freely chooses a communist path development.” This was particularly true for the case of Vietnam. The implementation of that “communist path of development” in the North has resulted in a standard of life that was more inadequate than under French colonialism, during the period of war, and compared to that of the South.<sup>12</sup>

More adamantly, communism ran counter to “reason.” To “quickly” escape the conditions of underdevelopment, the communists had “demanded that the people sacrifice too much.” developing policies that “stepped upon the life, happiness, and personhood of the people.” Lost in the communist path to development were personal and social freedoms, human dignity, spirituality, and that of family life. While sacrifice was necessary for progress, that sacrifice must be for the good of the nation, “for personhood, freedom, and democracy” not for the “totalitarian communist party...the Soviet Russian-Chinese foreigners...[or] the bloodthirsty, immoral communist leadership.” Reflective of Personalist values, communism is condemned as a path of development that irrationally destroys the innate “spirituality” and “humanity” of the person. It was because of this destruction of innate human values that cases of revolt against communist rule erupted in Eastern Europe and the developing world of Asia in recent years. Ultimately, “the Communist solution has not enthused Vietnam, a country that has much experience with the Communists.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> “Tài Liệu số 2/59: Đường Lối Phát Triển Của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam,” attachment to CV số 39/HTTU/TT, assigned usage for 3 weeks beginning on the first week of March 1959, Folder No. 20186, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của UB Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TƯ v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị các tài liệu số 1/59, 2/59, 5/59, 6/59 năm 1959.*

<sup>12</sup> Evidence of this, according to the document, came from letters sent from the north, northern emigres, refugees, and international observers (ibid).

<sup>13</sup> “Đê đi đến cái kết quá thấp kém ấy, giải pháp Cộng Sản lại đòi hỏi dân chúng rất nhiều hy sinh quá mức: hy sinh tự do, hy sinh nhân phẩm, hy sinh tình cảm thiêng liêng trong gia đình, hy sinh các tính ngưỡng sâu sắc nhất của con người và nhất là hy sinh cho một tương lai vô định.... Vì vậy ta có thể hiểu vì sao, trong các chế độ Cộng Sản, tuy bị đè ép dưới bộ máy thống trị tổ chức rất chặt chẽ mà dân chúng, đối với hai tay không, vẫn nổi dậy để chống đối luôn! Các vụ POZNAN, BUDAPEST, QUỲNH LƯU, NHÂN VĂN... Kinh nghiệm ấy cho ta thấy một cách rõ ràng sự thất bại của giải pháp Cộng Sản trong công cuộc đã một nước thoát ra khỏi tình trạng kinh tế thấp kém. Vì vậy giải pháp Cộng Sản đã không hấp dẫn được Việt Nam là nước có nhiều kinh nghiệm về Cộng Sản. Đừng về một phương diện khác lại càng thấy rõ là các dân tộc, nhất là dân tộc các nước Á Châu từ xưa vẫn trọng các giá trị tinh thần, không thể chấp nhận một chế độ chà đạp lên trên tía trị tinh thần” (ibid).

While communism was clearly not a path the Southern Republic could adopt, the path offered by the West would, too, not suffice. As argued, in “democratic capitalist regimes,” society was still filled with “injustice and competition” and these capitalist countries had left behind a “poignant legacy of domination.” While the Republic accepted the West’s fundamental definition of “freedom,” the Republic does not “fully follow its path.” The partial rejection of the capitalist path of the development, on the one hand, is based on Republican adamant opposition to Western colonialism. Economic, cultural, and political development in the West was achieved via “market and resource exploitation of the developing world” during the previous centuries. Indeed, while Western countries were democratic, free, and economically developed, these benefits were only afforded to their domestic population. For “those countries under their domination, these fundamentals were not implemented.” Under colonialism, the West had “used [their colonies] as consumption areas of their technological products,” and extracted “beneficial resources” that had allowed the Western nations—and only Western—to develop.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, capitalism could not “completely resolve the difficulties of economic underdevelopment.” For those underdeveloped countries that chose the “capitalist path,” their problems were multiplied as these countries experienced “increasing difference between different classes of the people.” This resulted in disappointment, demands for abrupt reformation of the state, and explains the political instability that turned “democratic and parliamentary regimes” into “military authoritarian” states.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, capitalism, too, was not the answer for Vietnamese underdevelopment. As argued in 1959 study documents, the “capitalist path” took hundreds of years to complete and the Vietnamese were not given the same opportunities as the West. As a decolonizing country, Vietnam has no colonies nor does it “intend to dominate any country and cannot buy cheap resources and sell dearly.”<sup>16</sup>

### *The Personalist Path of Development*

Beginning in 1959, Personalism was presented as a novel and unique path to “escape” the conditions of Vietnamese underdevelopment. In PSP sessions, Personalism is depicted as the “quickest” and “most reasonable, meaning demanding the least sacrifice” path for Vietnamese

<sup>14</sup> “Trên căn bản, chúng ta tán đồng nguyên tắc tự do của tự do tư bản chủ nghĩa. Song như thế không có nghĩa là ta hoàn toàn theo đường lối ấy. Vì sao? Mức sống rất cao của các nước Âu Mỹ theo giải pháp tự do tư bản, những tự do dân chủ mà họ hưởng, những tiến triển về văn hóa, các tổ chức an ninh xã hội của họ, là những điều hấp dẫn không nhỏ đối với các nước kém mở mang. Song ta phải tự hỏi: ‘Họ đã đạt đến trình độ ấy sau thời gian nào? Trong những điều kiện và hoàn cảnh nào?’ Trong thế kỷ thứ 19 và 20 các nước ấy đã lợi dụng thị trường và nguyên liệu của các nước kém mở mang bằng chính sách thuộc địa: Tại nước họ thì tự do dân chủ, tự do khuếch trương tư bản, kỹ nghệ hóa, mà tại các nước bị họ thống trị thì các nguyên tắc ấy lại không được áp dụng, họ không kỹ nghệ hóa các thuộc địa để dùng làm nơi tiêu thụ kỹ nghệ phẩm và cung cấp nguyên liệu có lợi cho họ và giúp họ phát triển (ibid).

<sup>15</sup> “Nhìn vào kinh nghiệm cụ thể, chúng ta thấy một số nước kinh tế kém mở mang theo giải pháp tự do tư bản đã bị ít nhiều thất bại, cho nên ngày nay các nước ấy đã phải chình đốn lại đường lối của họ cho thích ứng với hoàn cảnh của họ hơn.... Đó là vì giải pháp phát triển theo tự do tư bản chủ nghĩa chưa giải quyết được toàn bộ các khó khăn của các nước kinh tế kém mở mang, mà lại còn đề thêm các bài toán gay go khác .... Tình trạng ấy đã gây sự bất mãn, sự đòi hỏi một cuộc thay đổi đột ngột và quan trọng, cho nên đã có những cuộc đảo chính để sửa đổi giải pháp đang áp dụng cho hợp với hoàn cảnh thực tế. Họ đã thay đổi từ chế độ dân chủ đại nghị sang hình thức quân nhân chuyên chế, để tìm một lối thoát” (ibid).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

development.<sup>17</sup> Most poignantly, however, was the emphasized ideological differences Republican Personalists had with their communist adversaries. As argued, unlike the communists who seek to only liberate individuals from “material” want, Personalists seek the total liberation of the human experience, particularly the liberation of the human “spirit.”<sup>18</sup> What this “liberation of the spirit” meant was clearly articulated in study documents.

According to one 1959 text, the errors of communism resulted from the inability of people in the North to be “liberated from the mentality of slavery that our people had contracted during the period of [Chinese rule] and almost an entire century of colonialist domination.” This “mentality of slavery” was ultimately a subservience to foreign powers. This subservience produces a “imitation” of negative and detrimental aspects of the foreign and implementing these aspects in domestic affairs. As argued, “people still adhere to foreigners and believe that anything from the foreigners must be good, smart, more beautiful than their own.” So they copy, become dependent, “lack effort and want to follow an already paved path.”<sup>19</sup> Personalism, thus, was the attempt of the Vietnamese government and people to discover and implement a path of development situated between communism and capitalism. It was “the clearest expression of the willpower, the spirit of independence” of the Vietnamese people.<sup>20</sup>

Communism, in contrast to Personalism, views individuals as “economic resources.” Study materials point out that the communists view people as “resources” for material production. This erroneous perspective resulted in “ignore[ing] the value, essence of the human person...[allowing] the communist to sacrifice thousands of people to achieve their plans.”<sup>21</sup> Personalism, in contrast, view human beings not as resources but instead argue that “resources by themselves have no value, [and] it is precisely because of the person that [resources] have value.” Personalism, thus, elevates the human person above that of economic resources, respects the inherent value of the person, and, under the Republic, would ensure the “rights of a person”

<sup>17</sup> With these issues in mind, the “correct” path must be chosen wisely because given the “realities” of Vietnam, there could be no second chance. As argued, “for Vietnam, to be wrong would be catastrophic.” Like a sick patient, the “remedy” for Vietnamese underdevelopment cannot be the same as those nations who are stronger, and the Vietnamese people cannot blindly “follow those medicine men who are without experience” (ibid).

<sup>18</sup> “Câu Hỏi Hướng Dẫn Tìm Hiểu Thông Điệp Của Tổng Thống Gởi Quốc Dân Nhân Dịp Lễ Kỷ Hợi (1959)” dated 3.25.1959 used to “make more clear material number 1/59” in Folder No. 20186, *Tài Liệu của UB Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TU v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị các tài liệu số 1/59, 2/59, 5/59, 6/59 năm 1959*.

<sup>19</sup> “Nếu có nhóm người áp dụng chủ nghĩa Cộng Sản tại Bắc Phần, đó là vì học chưa cởi mở được cái tinh thần nô lệ mà dân tộc ta bị tiếm nhiệm trong suốt thời kỳ Bắc Thuộc và trong gần một thế kỷ bị thực dân thống trị. Nô lệ là ở chỗ bất chước và lệ thuộc ngoại bang, tai hại là thường bất chước cái dở, cái xấu hơn bất chước cái hay, cái tốt. Vì nếu có người vẫn còn hướng về ngoại quốc và cho rằng cái gì của ngoại quốc cũng hay, giỏi, đẹp hơn bản xứ, để đề nghị bất chước theo, thì đó cũng là do cái tàn tích của tinh thần ý lại, thiếu cố gắng muốn đi con đường có sẵn, dễ dàng, khỏi phải suy nghĩ tìm tòi” (“Tài Liệu số 2/59: Đường Lối Phát Triển Của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam,” Folder No. 20186, PTTĐỊCH).

<sup>20</sup> “Nếu ngày nay chúng ta—Chính phủ cũng như cả đoàn thể và nhân dân—đi tìm một đường lối Việt Nam để tiến triển, một lối thoát giữa hai cái bẽ tắc của các giải pháp Cộng Sản và tự do tư bản ấy là chúng ta muốn biểu lộ một cách rõ rệt nhất ý chí quyết cường, tinh thần tự lập cố hữu của dân tộc Việt Nam” (ibid).

<sup>21</sup> “Cộng sản chủ trương: “con người là tài sản quý nhất”. Và Cộng Sản truyền rằng như thế là đường lối Cộng Sản đã tôn trọng con người hơn các đường lối khác. Song xét kỹ, ta thấy ngay rằng chủ trương của Cộng Sản rất kỳ dị vì đã coi con người là một tài sản, dù là “tài sản quý nhất”. Con người không phải là một tài sản, mà con người sản xuất ra các tài sản. Tài sản có được là nhờ con người. Tài sản tự nó không có giá trị, mà chính con người đã làm cho nó có giá trị. Vì coi con người là một tài sản một công cụ để sản xuất như các công cụ khác, và phủ nhận giá trị, phẩm cách con người cho nên Cộng Sản hy sinh thủ tiêu hàng ngàn hàng vạn người để thực hiện những kế hoạch của họ, để rồi sau một thời gian khi thất bại thì lại đề ra sửa sai” (ibid).



while also creating opportunities for human beings to develop materially, mentally, and spiritually.<sup>22</sup>

More than a path to progress the “corporeal” life of man, Personalism is also concerned with man’s spiritual life, seeking to develop his intellect, “soul,” and emotional experiences. If underdevelopment meant a particular “psychology” or “mentality” brought about by “enslavement” under Chinese rule and colonial domination, the progress of this “spiritual life” would be one that removed that “slave mentality” and allowed the Vietnamese man to be intellectually and culturally free. Moreover, that “liberation of the spirit” emphasized in Personalist philosophy would return emotionality and empathy which were ripped from the human experience through the rise of modern materialism.<sup>23</sup>

Contrasts to Western ideals are also made. For one, the Personalist Revolution is “deeper and wider” than the French Revolution, seeking to politically and economically equalize all the classes of society. More than simply a means to material security and comfort, economic development in Personalist Vietnam is meant to “develop the morality” of its citizens, providing opportunity and means for individuals to “develop their personhood” and achieve at their fullest potential.<sup>24</sup> For another, Personalism differed from Western individualism. Personalism emphasized the “holism” of human beings and took into account the “natural communities” that human beings belong to such as the family, occupational relationships, society, and the nation.<sup>25</sup> Capitalism, as viewed by the Republic, was based upon the economic competition between individuals which create “conflict between people and the community and has led to extreme consequences.” Republican Personalism, on the other hand, is based on “mutual support” [*trung*

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*

<sup>23</sup> On “Spiritualism,” see “Chữ Nghĩa Duy Linh” in Folder No. 20353, PTTĐICH, *Tài Liệu v/v Học Tập Chính Trị “Chữ Nghĩa Duy Linh” Năm 1960*. This supplemental document explicates what exactly “spiritualism” is. Spiritualism is premised on the idea that human beings are composed of two components: the material and the soul or the spirit. Of those two components, the greater was that of the spirit because “it was with the mind that makes human beings above that of the rest of animals.” Human happiness, thus, is not dependent merely on material satisfaction, but can only be achieved if the “value and dignity of the person is respected” and “the rights of the person is completely ensured and satisfied.” According to Spiritualism, man’s material existence is intertwined with his spiritual existence. In terms of progress, this meant that as man developed materially, he too must develop spiritually. Man must have enough to eat, clothes to wear, jobs to work, and opportunities for self-sufficiency. However, man, too, must have beliefs, thoughts, culture, and education to develop his mind and spirit. According to the text, spiritualism is based on the idea that the universe is created and determined by an “incorporeal and invisible hand” which made man with both a soul and a body. That soul was “immortal, indeterminate, contemplative and free.” As a corporeal being, man is bounded by time and space, is concerned with his own survival and well being, and is changes through the passage of time. On the other hand, as a spiritual being, man is able to transcend space and time through thought and intellect, is able to care and empathize with those who are not himself, have freedom, and his fundamental self does not change. This spiritual self allows man to be “happy, sad, love, feel, or be contemplative.”

<sup>24</sup> The Personalist liberation articulated in 1959 was also one that would “restore the foundational and true morality” of the Vietnamese tradition. As argued, this did not mean restoring all aspects of Vietnamese “feudalist” society, but rather historical aspects that “harmonize with the spirit of Personalism.” These were usually “Confucian” virtues and terminologies which could be rearticulated through the philosophical paradigm of Personalism (“Câu Hỏi Hướng Dẫn Tìm Hiểu Thông Điệp Của Tổng Thống Gởi Quốc Dân Nhân Dị Lễ Kỳ Hội [1959].”)

<sup>25</sup> “Nhân Vị chủ nghĩa của chúng ta khác hẳn cá nhân chủ nghĩa của các nước tự do tư bản. Nhân vị chủ nghĩa chú trọng đến con người toàn diện, con người trong cộng đồng tự nhiên như gia đình, nghề nghiệp, xã hội con người trong quốc gia xã hội” (“Tài Liệu số 2/59: Đường Lối Phát Triển Của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam,” Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH).

*thân tương trợ*].<sup>26</sup> Rejecting economic competition as “dangerous” and “immoral,” Personalists’ emphasize the “natural community” [*cộng đồng tự nhiên*] in which each human had automatic responsibility for the welfare of his fellow man. As argued, it was only through this form of “communalism” that Vietnam progressed.<sup>27</sup>

It was upon this idea of “mutual support” that the Republican doctrine of “communal progress” [*cộng đồng phát triển*] was based. To “communally progress” meant “preventing economic and political centralization within the hands of a minority.” It meant that citizens must perceive themselves as sharing the same fate as every other individual in the nation. As argued in one study document, “usually, people only focus on individual benefits or that of their family’s while forgetting that the individual and the family are within that of the nation and the people, and that the development of the individual and the family is dependent on the development of the nation and the people.” “Progress” accordingly must be achieved collectively rather than individually. This collective effort was necessary precisely because of that “reality” that Vietnam faces: impoverishment, national division, and the threat of communism. As a “natural community” that was intertwined with other “natural communities,” the fate of the nation lies in the hands of its citizens, and concerns towards one family, clan, or other modes of belonging cannot discount the fate of the nation.<sup>28</sup>

In accordance with the doctrine of “communal progress,” the “community” is conceptualized as the unified entity of the Vietnamese nation. The experience and desire for development by the general Vietnamese population was viewed as synonymous with the agenda of the State. To live as a citizen—to be a member of the national community—each individual must contribute their talent, skills, and resources to the collective advancement: “those with wealth, people with talent, those with specialty, people with means, through the encouragement and leadership of the various organizations, of the government.” Collaboration between these state and civil society was paramount with each serving a specific role in communal progress. Civil society would contribute manpower, skills, and resources and the state would direct these contributions in engineered state projects to achieve a fundamental level of progress for all members of society.<sup>29</sup>

To achieve this “communal progress,” the Republic promised to support and encourage the majority of the population who still live in “impoverished conditions” to “catch up” to the minority of the population who has made advances in living standards and cultural progress. This

<sup>26</sup> “Tương thân, tương trợ” builds from the phrase “tương thân, tương ái” which is to mean “help and love one another.” “Tương” means “together.” “Thân” literally translates to “body”, and “trợ” comes from the terms “hỗ trợ” or “trợ giúp” meaning “support” or “help.” “Tương thân, tương trợ” thus translates to “people together, helping one another,” or, in simplified terms, “mutual support.”

<sup>27</sup> “Chúng ta chủ trương mọi người phải tương thân, tương trợ - và tương thân tương trợ là một nhiệm vụ của người đối với người. Trong chế độ tư bản, tự do cạnh tranh, cá nhân tự do tiến triển, dù sự tiến triển ấy có làm thiệt hại đến những cá nhân khác cũng mặc miễn là các hành động cạnh tranh ấy ở trong khuôn khổ của luật pháp hay là được xếp đặt cho khỏi phạm luật bằng cách xoay xở cả luật pháp. Chủ trương ấy rất nguy hiểm, vô nhân đạo, vì đã dung túng cá nhân phát triển và sống trên mồ hôi, xương máu của nhân loại” (“Tài Liệu số 2/59: Đường Lối Phát Triển Của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam,” Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH).

<sup>28</sup> “Câu Hỏi Hướng Dẫn Tìm Hiểu Thông Điệp Của Tổng Thống Gởi Quốc Dân Nhân Dịp Lễ Kỷ Hợi (1959)” Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH.

<sup>29</sup> “Chúng ta tổ chức theo phương pháp phát triển cộng đồng. Một sự hợp tác tự nguyện tự giác giữa các tầng lớp nhân dân và chính quyền: kẻ có của, người có công, kẻ góp chuyên môn, người góp phương tiện, với sự thúc đẩy và hướng dẫn của các đoàn thể, của chính quyền” (ibid).

effort on the part of the Republican government was meant to achieve a “democratized” economy by reserving economic support for the rural population which must “progress more so and more quickly.” By doing so, differences of wealth would be minimized, and the entirety of the nation can advance without facing fundamental problems that came with Capitalism.<sup>30</sup>

In policy, the Personalist state promised that each citizen would have access to “basic capital,” or elementary means of production in the form of land, cattle, seeds, and fertilizer upon which individuals, through their own efforts, could become small capitalists. As argued in the study document, state supported initiatives for rural credits, cooperatives, and farmer associations were designed to protect these economic privileges. These initiatives provided low-interest credits for peasants to invest in seeds, fertilizer, cattle, and machinery as well as controlling prices for these necessary means of production. Farmers would be educated on technology and government policies, ensuring that each citizen would be able to economically develop to their fullest potential.<sup>31</sup>

“Underdevelopment” and the “Personalist solution” were running themes for the remainder of 1959 political study. The third and fourth mandatory document in 1959 emphasized national expenditure and debt.<sup>32</sup> In November and December, PSP sessions studied the fifth PSP document which dealt with “Technologization” policies of the Republic which emphasized rural development and supporting novel methods to produce agricultural goods.<sup>33</sup> In January of 1960, the PSP focused on the “Political Direction of the Republic of Vietnam” rearticulated matters of underdevelopment and depicted “spiritualism” as the foundation of Personalist democracy.<sup>34</sup>

### *Foreign Assistance and Economic Self-Sufficiency*

The Personalist vision of Vietnamese economic and political autonomy, however, stood in stark contrast to the American economic and military “assistance” regularly received by the Republic. A paramount matter in discussing Vietnamese Underdevelopment, study documents were deployed to downplay the effects of foreign aid on Vietnamese domestic development. Through the PSP, the Republican state argued that despite American economic assistance, the economic development of Vietnam must not be “dependent on foreign assistance but [the

<sup>30</sup> “Chúng ta chú trọng mọi tầng lớp đều phải được tiến bộ, song tầng lớp thấp kém hơn thì phải được tiến bộ nhiều hơn, mau hơn. Trái lại tại những nước theo đường lối tư bản các tầng lớp giàu có nhờ đủ điều kiện hoàn cảnh hơn, lại càng được tiến bộ mau hơn các tầng lớp nghèo khó. Do đó sự cách biệt giữa hai tầng lớp càng ngày càng lớn sẽ gây nên sự hiềm khích, mâu thuẫn nhau giữa xã hội đưa đến các bất mãn, cá phản ứng không thể lường được, và sẽ gây mầm cho các cuộc đảo chính cách mạng mà Cộng Sản hay các kẻ đầu cơ chính trị lợi dụng” (“Tài Liệu số 2/59: Đường Lối Phát Triển Của Cộng Hòa Việt Nam,” Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH).

<sup>31</sup> This economic vision was an evolution of the Personalist values articulated in 1954 during formation of the Cần Lao Revolutionary Personalist Party. The Charter for the Party originally listed the name of the Party was the Nông Công (Peasants) Personalist Party rather than Cần Lao (Workers) Personalist Party, indicating their original target population was that of the “peasants” rather than the “workers” (See “Đảng Cương” in Folder No. 29361, PTTVNCH, *Về Hoạt Động của Cần Lao Nhân Vị Cách Mạng Đảng (Đảng Cần Lao Việt Nam) năm 1953-1964*).

<sup>32</sup> CV Số 346/HTTU/TT dated 11.2.1959 in Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH

<sup>33</sup> “Tài Liệu Số 5/59: Vấn Đề ‘Kỹ Nghệ Hóa’ của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” in Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH

<sup>34</sup> “Tài Liệu Số 6/59: Đường Lối Chính Trị Của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” in Folder No. 20186, PTTĐICH. Articulated in this document was the philosophy of “spiritualism” which was contrasted with “materialism” and “idealism” of Western philosophy. According to the PSP material, “spiritualism” was the foundation of Personalist democracy which rejected democracy as a means to find “material happiness.” Rather the utilization of democracy must be a “never ending effort to discover every possible political method that ensures every citizen have the freedom to progress, develop their intellect, undertake their responsibilities and fully participate” in the affairs of the nation.

Republic] must make an effort to increase domestic production.” While the reception of foreign imports was acknowledged, study documents argue that due to the economic impoverishment of the nation, foreign imports were presently necessary but cannot be the ultimate goal. The objective was to temporarily satisfy the economic requirements of the present while laying the foundations for economic “self-sufficiency” *tự túc* in the future.<sup>35</sup>

To defend the reception of foreign assistance, anticommunist rhetoric was deployed, contrasting American aid to the South to the assistance received by communist-affiliated countries. Economic assistance from Communist superpowers is described as a “scheme to disrupt the economy” of developing nations. Alongside various strategies to create conflict between owners and workers, communist economic assistance served to make developing countries subservient to international communism. Countries like Poland, Hungary, and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe are “not only politically and culturally dependent, but also economically dependent” on the Soviet Union. Those countries which receive economic aid from the Soviets must “accept commercial and cultural exchanges” with the communist superpower. Exploiting these forms of diplomatic intercourse, the Soviet Union disseminated the communist doctrine and “paved the way for political infiltration.”<sup>36</sup>

Although first articulated in 1958, similar messages were deployed across the remainder of the First Republic, conjoining the justification of foreign assistance with Republican efforts to safeguard the nation from communist penetration. A 1960 study material on “peaceful coexistence” for example, described the Soviet doctrine as a means for communists to “continue the purpose of warfare under an external disguise of pleasantries by non-military means.” While the Soviets utilized economic, technological, cultural, and commercial exchanges to build communist influence internationally, assistance from the Free World is based on an attempt to “raise the living standards of the people in order to prevent the communist germ from having any territory to grow.” By creating satisfactory economic and political conditions, the Republic can avoid political unrest and safeguard itself from communist influence.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in 1962, study documents argue that “without economic strength, free nations, particularly those newly independent nations, cannot sustain necessary military structures to combat the military infiltration of the communists.” Utilizing the Marshall and Columbo Plan as historical examples, study documents argue that nations receiving American aid were able to avoid communist influence following the Second World War.<sup>38</sup>

In tandem with the anticommunist objectives achieved through foreign assistance, study documents also made the case that reception of foreign aid did not—and must not—diminish the political autonomy of the Republic. As argued in study documents, economic assistance from the US was accepted by the Republic because “it did not conflict with the spirit of independence and the standpoint of struggle of the people and even helps us with necessary means and

<sup>35</sup> “Tài Liệu Số 5/59: Vấn Đề ‘Kỹ Nghệ Hóa’ của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” in Folder No. 20186, PTTĐỊCH

<sup>36</sup> “Trước Âm Mưu Lũng Đòn Kinh Tế của Cộng Sản Thế Giới Tự Do Phải Đối Phó Như Thế Nào?” dated 12.2.1958 in Folder No. 20030, PTTĐỊCH, *Hồ Sơ v/v tổ chức học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại Bộ Kinh Tế năm 1958*. See similar arguments in “Chiến Thuật ‘Sống Chung Hòa Bình’ của Cộng Sản” dated 9.24.1960 in Folder No. 20357, PTTĐỊCH, *Tài Liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dẫn học tập ‘đường lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa’ năm 1960*.

<sup>37</sup> “Chiến Thuật ‘Sống Chung Hòa Bình’ của Cộng Sản” dated 9.24.1960 in Folder No. 20357, PTTĐỊCH.

<sup>38</sup> “Viện Trợ Hoa Kỳ và Công Cuộc Chống Cộng Tại Việt Nam Cộng Hòa,” dated 6.26.1962 in Folder No. 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Năm 1958-1974*.

opportunities to promote our independence and actualize [our] standpoint of struggle.” This meant that American aid made possible economic prosperity of the Vietnamese Republic and aided the Republic in combating communism. Although American assistance clearly affected the “political, military, cultural, societal, and especially the economic activities of Vietnam,” these influences were not negative in that it aids the development of the Vietnamese Republic. Ultimately, assistance was entirely based on decisions of the Vietnamese government, and “American specialists only help us with opinions to effectively utilize that assistance.” The Republic can choose whether to accept aid, was not pressured by any demands, and can determine how the aid was utilized. Despite the “generous” assistance of the Americans, the people of the Republic must not fall into “dependency”—conceptualized as a psychological state. Rather, “now more than ever, the spirit of self-development, self-reliance of the people’s tradition must firmly develop.” Given the “realities” of the nation, “the attitude of dependency on foreigners or questioning suspicion” cannot be tolerated.<sup>39</sup>

*Personalism in Application: Ấp Chiến Lược [Strategic Hamlet] and Chiêu Hồi [Open Arms]*

From 1958 to the end of the First Republic, the ideals of Personalist development were utilized as fundamental concepts in South Vietnamese political discourse. Personalism was conceived as an indigenous ideology that valorizes the “self-sufficiency” of the Vietnamese people and the determination of Vietnamese Republic to create a “revolutionized” and progressive society. In his speech to the National Assembly in October of 1959, Diệm argued that Personalism was a path of development “more adapted to the desires of underdeveloped countries, and...matched the characteristics of traditional communities of the people.”<sup>40</sup> In that same year, a speech from the Minister of the Interior—head of the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants—emphasized the need for civil servants to participate and act “close to reality...particularly when it comes to the demands of the political realities of the nation. This meant that civil servants must “study, cultivate intellect, absorb the directions of the Center...change his method of work...[and] acknowledge his mission for the people, for the nation, in a location that is divided, underdeveloped, and is threatened by Communism.”<sup>41</sup>

Throughout this period, non-governmental forums like *Gió Nam* developed on the themes of “underdevelopment” first laid out by the President in 1958 and studied in PSP sessions. A piece published in 1959, for example, highlighted “the work of study by civil servants within an underdeveloped country.”<sup>42</sup> Another piece highlighted the uniqueness of Personalism, arguing that “there is no economic law that demands all nations must develop in accordance with a single path.”<sup>43</sup> In August of 1960, *Gió Nam*’s letter to its readers emphasized the role of the civil servants in the project to “escape” underdevelopment.<sup>44</sup> In 1961, the forum carried articles on “technologization” of the Vietnamese economy and national expenditures.<sup>45</sup> The renowned

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> “Thông điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Độc Tại Quốc Hội ngày 5 tháng 10 năm 1959,” *Gió Nam*, 1959 (16), pp. 3-7.

<sup>41</sup> “Diễn Văn của Ông Lâm Lễ Trinh,” *Gió Nam*, 1959 (16), pp. 8-9.

<sup>42</sup> Nguyễn V. Thông, “Học Tập Đề Tiên,” *Gió Nam*, 1959(17), 20-22.

<sup>43</sup> Vũ Quốc Thúc, “Vấn Đề Kinh Tế Thiếu Mỡ Mang,” *Gió Nam* 1960(18), 4-6, 17 and *Gió Nam* 1960(19), 2-4, 35-37.

<sup>44</sup> “Sớ Mạng Người Công Chức Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại,” *Gió Nam* 1960(23), 3.

<sup>45</sup> See Nguyễn Bích Huệ, “Các Tổ chức Tài Trợ Kỹ Nghệ,” *Gió Nam* 1961 (31), 6-9, 48-49; *Gió Nam* 1961(32), 12; Người Thăng Long, “Ngành Công Kỹ Nghệ ở Bắc” *Gió Nam* 1960(33), 14, 16; Nguyễn Bích Huệ, “Kiểm Soát Tín

author Đoàn Thêm explicates the issue of “personal progress” within the paradigm of Vietnamese underdevelopment arguing that each person must acknowledge his or her own “underdevelopment” and craft a “personal program in the same way that governments craft programs for building and development.”<sup>46</sup> On National Day of 1961, Diệm identified the three “enemies” the Republic must face were “communism, underdevelopment, and disunity.”<sup>47</sup>

By the time the Strategic Hamlet Program was rolled out in 1962, the paradigm of “underdevelopment” and the nuances of the Personalist path of development were staple elements in South Vietnamese political philosophy.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, it was precisely through this lens that the Strategic Hamlet initiative was articulated and conceived. Long held as a counter-insurgency strategy that was introduced to the Republican administration by American advisor Roger Hilsman, the concept of the Strategic Hamlet, however, involved much more than the construction of fortified villages and communes in the countryside. For the administration, it meant the actualization of ideals of progress, self-sufficiency and Personalist development in policy.<sup>49</sup>

As the flagship project headed by Ngô Đình Nhu, the effort was articulated as general theory to actualize nation-wide restructuring of South Vietnamese society. Envisioned for the Strategic Hamlet project was a social revolution that would fundamentally transform the values, habits, and living conditions of the South and inaugurate “a new foundation of civilization.” Far from simply having military or economic purposes, the Strategic Hamlet would serve to bring the rural population from “an old society full of injustice...to a new society, in which every individual would have opportunity and abundance of means to develop their potential.” As the continuation of the national revolution that the South had engaged in for the last 8 years, the Strategic Hamlet was designed to combat the three newly defined enemies of the republic—communism, underdevelopment, and disunity—and sought to reconfigure the everyday activities of the populace.<sup>50</sup>

When conceived, the Strategic Hamlet initiative clearly placed emphasis on rural communities. As argued, despite the “achievements in matters of politics, economics, and

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dụng tại Các Nước Đông Nam Á Châu,” 1961(34), 15-19; Nguyễn Hòa Phâm, “Bên Cảnh Hiện tượng Chậm Tiến: Một vài đặc điểm của kỹ thuật sản xuất tại những quốc gia kỹ nghệ” *Gió Nam* 1961(36), 1-3.

<sup>46</sup> Đoàn Thêm, “Sự Chậm Tiến Cá Nhân” *Gió Nam* 1961(33), 2-5.

<sup>47</sup> “Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày Lễ Quốc Khánh 1961,” *Gió Nam* (38), inside cover page.

<sup>48</sup> Apart from *Gió Nam*, see also articles from *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*—a key textual forum for the South Vietnamese military. The term “underdeveloped” became a political mantra to describe South Vietnam. Introductions to issues like “Bước Đường Nối Tiếp” in *Chiến Sĩ Cộng Hòa*, May 1961(59), 3 often entailed a near verbatim reiteration of the concept: “hoàn cảnh của nước chúng ta là một nước chậm tiến lại bị kẻ thù Cộng Sản không ngừng quấy phá.”

<sup>49</sup> Despite the dearth of direct documentation of 1962 political study in Vietnam National Archive II, *Chiến Sĩ*—the main forum for “training and information” of the National Revolutionary Movement—provides documented insight into the topics of political education for that year. Articles published in *Chiến Sĩ* not only reflects study materials, but they are often used in political study sessions (contents from “Nhiệm Vụ Trước Tình Thế Mới” published in issue 82 of *Chiến Sĩ* were repeated in study sessions by police and security organs following the announcement of the “State of Emergency” in October of 1961; The document “Ý Nghĩa Ngày Quốc Khánh 26 tháng 10” in a Special Issue for October of 1961 was in commemoration of 1961 National Day. Documented in Folder No. 20532, PTTĐICH, *Biên Bản các Buổi Học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11 và 12.1961*). Branches of the NRM conducted their own political study sessions during the CDTC. A cursory review of 1962 *Chiến Sĩ* demonstrates that 1962 was the year of the Strategic Hamlet.

<sup>50</sup> “Mục Đích Xây Dựng Ấp Chiên Lược,” *Chiến Sĩ*, 1962(84), 13-15.

society...in rural areas, the rustic citizens have not seen any changes, nothing that has penetrated into their psyche in a clear manner.” The revolution has only been heard by the rural residents and has not “manifest in their life and that of their families.” Thus, the “progress” achieved in urban centers must be somehow transplanted into the rural countryside. Faced with the increasing insurgent activities of the last 2 years, rural communities would become the vanguard for ensuring the security of the nation. Each hamlet would become a community protected by fortifications of trenches, ditches, traps, and barriers that would essentially separate the guerrilla “fish” from its “water” (the rural population). With the security of the countryside established, hamlets would be able to undergo the revolutionization of their social microcosm and redress socio-economic injustice.<sup>51</sup>

To achieve social revolution in the hamlet, the Republican government sought to implement a new structure of “social rank” in these hamlets. At the very top were “warriors” who were the locally recruited militiamen serving as the main defensive unit of each hamlet. The second rank were elected officials within the hamlet. And at the very bottom were the peasants. The implementation of this new “social structure” was meant to redefine social worth in accordance to the present needs of the Personalist Revolution.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, “those individuals who contributed to the mission of opposing communism, underdevelopment, and disunity must be privileged.” Restructuring of society meant “immediately creating a new ladder of value in accordance to morality, humanism, with the ideals of Personalism, and communal progress.” These were the values of the Personalist path of development. The individuals valued in this “new society” would be “first awarded...last punished” and their families would also receive these benefits as well. Those who “stand outside of the present revolution,” whether they are “intellectuals, wealthy, or a notable lineage...do not deserve the goodwill of society but must be seen as obstacles to the progress of the people.” Through this restructuring of values and importance in South Vietnamese society, Republican citizens will be encouraged to participate in the Personalist Revolution, force those who are on-the-fence to determine their “standpoint,” and allow those who “have lost their way” to “return to Righteousness.”<sup>53</sup>

The Strategic Hamlet, furthermore, would be the pinnacle expression of South Vietnamese “self-sufficiency.” The formation of a strategic hamlet meant “providing for that hamlet means to progress towards self-sufficiency in all aspects.” Each hamlet was responsible for cultivating its own cadres, constructing new public buildings and conveniences, and protecting itself from communist infiltration. Weapons and funds to actualize these new activities within the hamlet are provided as loans that each hamlet would have to return to the government. What was expected was that each hamlet eventually be able to provide for themselves in matters of armament and munitions, as well as self-generated funding. According to the Minister of the Interior, “if we are not self-sufficient in the construction of strategic hamlets in regard to administrative as well as security...[and] borrow or ask for aid, we no longer have the characteristics of an independent nation.” Indeed, the Strategic Hamlet initiative was to be ultimately a Vietnamese endeavor that accentuated self-sufficiency in terms of not only the nation, but also a model of self-sufficiency for each individual hamlet.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> “Áp Chiến Lược,” *Chiến Sĩ*, 1962(85), 6-12.

<sup>52</sup> “Buổi Nói Chuyện của Ông Bộ Trưởng Nội Vụ Bùi Văn Lương về Áp Chiến Lược,” *Chiến Sĩ* 1962(87), 11-17

<sup>53</sup> “Áp Chiến Lược,” *Chiến Sĩ*, 1962(85), 9-10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 7; “Buổi Nói Chuyện của Ông Bộ Trưởng Nội Vụ Bùi Văn Lương về Áp Chiến Lược,” *Chiến Sĩ* 1962(87), 13.

However, the Strategic Hamlet, as conceptualized by the Republican government, was never intended to simply be a rural effort. As a mechanism to deliver the “national revolution” and establish the foundations of a “new civilization,” the model was expected to spread from the hinterlands to the urban centers.<sup>55</sup> In 1962, urban centers formed “strategic clusters” which were often community funded militias composed of around 40 young men within a jurisdiction whose duties would be to serve as night guards for their respective wards. Like the Strategic Hamlet in rural areas, the Strategic Cluster had the purpose refashioning the everyday life of its residents towards one fitting of the “new society.” This meant the sponsoring of new public facilities and amenities such as public bathrooms, communal libraries, cultural workshops, or new sporting grounds through communal funds or health inspections to ensure public hygiene. The idea was through these collective efforts, the residents would gradually become voluntarist in the maintenance, development and perpetuation of a socially “advanced” standard of life.<sup>56</sup>

Governmental organs had its “Strategic Area” *khu chiến lược* variant. The theoretical purpose of these “Areas” was to strategically renovate the administrative organ, revolutionize the self, and the creation of a new life within the organ. Civil servants would become “warriors” through the protection of their organs from infiltration, actively engage in secret reporting, and respond to collective calls to arms. Each governmental organ would become a “Strategic Area” with an “area charter” detailing expected monetary contribution, regulations and privileges in matters of democratic rule, communal progress, and social justice. Each “area” was to be viewed as a community whose operations are dependent on the collective contributions of its members. Social functions between bureaucrat’s families were to be organized and financial assistance to poorer members were to be prioritized. Like a self-sufficient community, each organ must gauge their expenditures in accordance to their member’s financial contributions.<sup>57</sup>

While the Strategic Hamlet initiative presents the quintessential case of Personalism in policy, similar application of Personalist concepts can also be found in the Chiêu Hồi Program. Initially conceived as a subsidiary of the Strategic Hamlet initiative, the Chiêu Hồi Program would eventually evolve into a national defense policy entailing political-warfare components, mass propaganda, and political amnesty to encourage enemy defection and facilitate intelligence gathering. Unlike its future manifestation, the original Chiêu Hồi Program rolled out in 1963 was crafted through the lens of the Personalist revolution and encouraged not only the “return” of insurgent soldiers to the nation, but also by those who are already in the nation to return to its ideals. Directed by the Minister of the Civic Commissariat, “Chiêu Hồi”—literally translated to “invitation to return”—emphasized the role of “struggle” [*đấu tranh*] against not only the communist enemy, but also “underdevelopment” and “disunity”—the three national “enemies” originally targeted by Diệm in 1961. Reflecting Personalist application, this struggle was one that was internal and spiritual, a necessary struggle for the “revolution of the self” to combat “the enemy in us and inside our hearts.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> “Diễn Từ Khai Mạc của Đồng Chí Chủ Tịch Trugn Ương tại Khóa Hội Thảo Trung Ương Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia (Ngày 16-12-1962),” *Chiến Sĩ* 162(93), 18-19.

<sup>56</sup> Running series titled “Khóm Chiến Lược” from Jan. 2-29, 1962 in *Saigon Mới*

<sup>57</sup> “Phần Thứ II: Góp Ý về việc thành lập các Khu Chiến Lược” attachment to CV Số 15595/YT/VPHT dated 9.5.1963 and “Khu Chiến Lược Bộ Y Tế: Khu Ước” attached to “Biên Bản Bầu Liên Tô Trưởng Khu Chiến Lược Bộ Y Tế” dated 10.12.1963 in Folder No. 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Năm 1958-1974*.

<sup>58</sup> Ngô Trọng Hiếu, “Quan Niệm Đấu Tranh và Vấn Đề ‘Chiêu Hồi Ta’” attached to CV Số 15595/YT/VP.HT dated 9.5.1963, Folder 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*.



Defining struggle as a holistic endeavor, the fight against communism must mean, on the one hand, contest for the support of the population, while, on the other hand, a fight against old habits and thoughts associated with “colonialism” and “feudalism.”<sup>59</sup> As with the Strategic Hamlet model, the purpose was to prepare the cadre and the citizenry for a “new society,” one rid of the ills of old and, instead, built on “equality, freedom, and charity”—the fundamentals of “mutual assistance.” This revolutionizing of society must necessarily begin with the self, deemed a “sacred duty” *nhiệm vụ thiêng liêng* imperative for the “historical revolutionizing struggle of the [Vietnamese] people.”<sup>60</sup> Within this paradigm, political study was elevated to a “national policy” *quốc sách* and was the most important means for achieving this “revolution of the self.” Emphasis was placed on the “absorption of Personalist ideals” and the rectification of personal ills—a matter made explicit by Trần Kim Tuyền since 1959.<sup>61</sup> By conjoining the personal struggle articulated through the Chiêu Hồi doctrine with the social revolution of the Strategic Hamlet, the Republic sought to remake the South Vietnamese society and the South Vietnamese man. For the Personalist Republic, these were matters imperative for the successful conduct of the anticommunist war and victory over communism.

While the vision of holistic rural-to-urban transformation of South Vietnamese society never fully manifested, Personalism had become a core aspect of Republican politics by the collapse of the First Republic in 1963. Examination of Strategic Hamlet initiative and the Chiêu Hồi Program has demonstrated the infusion of Personalist ideals into Republican policies and sketched the envisioned social revolution that the Personalists sought. More than a guiding philosophy, however, Personalism also served as a weapon deployed by the regime to defend some of its most draconian of actions. Below, we turn to the turbulent episode that led to the assassination of the Ngô brothers and the ultimate collapse of the First Republic. Unacknowledged in the voluminous historical corpus on the Vietnam War, Personalism played a key role in how the regime defended itself against allegations of human rights abuse, religious persecution, and authoritarianism during the Buddhist Crisis of 1963.

### *Personalism in Application: Nhân Vị [Personalism] and Nhân Quyền [Human Rights]*

The Buddhist Crisis has often been cited as a precipitating episode that led to the collapse of the First Republic in November of 1963. In May of 1963, leaders and adherents of Buddhist Faith in Hue protested the Republic’s policies over the flying of the Buddhist symbol during the celebration of the Birthday of the Buddha. The rarely enforced Decree 10 which prohibited the public display of symbols—whether religious or not—that signifies international allegiances was activated that year on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May by order of the President. The directive by the President

<sup>59</sup> Ngô Đình Nhu, “Huấn Thị của Ông Cố Vấn Chính Trị Nhân Dị Lễ Bế Giảng Khóa II Chiêu Hồi Tại Học Viện Quốc Gia Hành Chánh ngày 16.3.63,” attached to CV Số 641-QT/HT dated 4.17.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*.

<sup>60</sup> Ngô Trọng Hiếu, “Quan Niệm Đấu Tranh và Vấn Đề ‘Chiêu Hồi Ta’” attached to CV Số 15595/YT/VP.HT dated 9.5.1963, Folder 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*; Ngô Đình Nhu, “Huấn Thị của Ông Cố Vấn Chính Trị Nhân Dị Lễ Bế Giảng Khóa II Chiêu Hồi Tại Học Viện Quốc Gia Hành Chánh ngày 16.3.63,” attached to CV Số 641-QT/HT dated 4.17.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963*.

<sup>61</sup> Trần Kim Tuyền, “Góp Phần Vào Vấn Đề Học tập,” *Gió Nam* (is. 13), 14-21. This document was made an official PSP document for the Ministry of Administration and Transportation in March of 1963 (CV số 5-CC/TTK/HT, Folder No. 1600, BCCGT (1948-1966), *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập đề tài của Bác Sĩ Trần Kim Tuyền về vấn đề học tập năm 1963*).

became a pretext for mass demonstrations in the city of Hue which was met by harsh repression by the Republican government, leaving 9 dead. This incident was followed by further protests against not only the decree, but against the Diem government itself and the history of discrimination and repression against those of the Buddhist Faith under the Republican administration.<sup>62</sup> From June to August, the Crisis escalated, spotlighted by the immolation of Thích Quảng Đức in denunciation of Republican policies. Coverage of the monk burning himself in the lotus position in the presence of praying disciples received international attention and became an image of societal discontents and resistance, demanding religious freedom and the end of authoritarian rule in South Vietnam. Despite arriving at a “Joint Resolution” between the government and the Buddhist delegation in July, the regime soon adopted a hardline position against the Buddhists. Raids against pagodas followed in August and once those raids were made known, American support for the Diem regime turned.<sup>63</sup>

In the face of domestic and international condemnation of regime’s dealing with Buddhist protest, the government took great pains to defend itself, particularly to its own administrative staff through the PSP. Starting on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June of 1963, political study materials distributed by the Directorate of Information dealt with the Buddhist Crisis. The PSP throughout June sought to demonstrate popular support to the regime, emphasized the government’s position regarding Decree 10, and reaffirmed the administration’s commitment to freedom of belief and religion.<sup>64</sup> Two days prior, the President established an Inter-ministerial Committee to engage in dialogue with the representatives of the Buddhist faith. The body was headed by the Vice President, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ, various directors from the Office of the President, and the Minister of the Interior. The body engaged with The Joint Committee to Protect Buddhism encompassing multiple leaders from the communities in the Central and Southern provinces.<sup>65</sup> Dialogues—

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<sup>62</sup> Throughout July, American support remained quite adamant for the regime. Fredrick Nolting, assigned as the American ambassador to the Republic, reaffirmed the position of the regime that there was no oppression against the Buddhist Faith in a statement given to the UPI in late July. The statement was rejected by Thích Tâm Châu, one the leaders of the Buddhist delegation, who sent a letter to Nolting arguing “these cases of repression is the climax of a litany of abuse of power, oppression, murder that the Buddhists had to carry for many years” originating from the regime (Thích Nhật Từ and Nguyễn Kha, eds., *Pháp nạn Phật Giáo 1963: Nguyên Nhân, bản chất và tiến trình*, Nhà Xuất Bản Hồng Đức: Hà Nội [2013], 442).

<sup>63</sup> See Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars (1945-1990)*, NY: Harper Perennial (1991), 94-97; Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*, (NY: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76-78; Thích Nhật Từ and Nguyễn Kha, eds., *Pháp nạn Phật Giáo 1963: Nguyên Nhân, bản chất và tiến trình*, Nhà Xuất Bản Hồng Đức: Hà Nội (2013), 269-381

<sup>64</sup> The first PSP document began with a statement of support from “Buddhists of the Province Phước Tuy,” the orchestrators of political study sought to create a division between the true and faithful followers of Buddhism and those who had been corrupted and infiltrated by “reactionaries” and “rebels.” The statement, which was sent through the provincial head, glorified the “virtue” President, his “mission to save and develop the nation,” and acknowledges the existence of freedom of thought and religion under the regime. Moreover, this signed statement—from a number of Buddhist scholars and leaders—acknowledges the core of the Diem administration’s position on the Buddhist issue: that the national flag “must come before and above” any religious flag. This statement was followed by a broadcasted memo for all government branches, reaffirming the administration’s commitment to freedom of belief and religion (CV Số 4020-QT/HDHT dated 6.6.1963 in Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ Học Tập các đề tài năm 1963*). Study sessions in the General Office of Taxation emphasized the contents of the Decree and freedom of religion (“Biên Bản Buổi học tập cấp II tại Phòng Văn Thư Tổng Nha Quan Thuế ngày 14.6.63 hồi 16g30,” in Folder No. 3463, TQT).

<sup>65</sup> “Do Quyết Định Của Tổng Thống VNCH 1 Ủy Ban Liên Bộ được thành lập để giải quyết những vụ xảy ra từ 8-5-63,” *Saigon Mới* 6.6.1963; “Ủy ban liên bộ tiếp xúc Đại Diện Phật Giáo trong bầu không khí thân mật,” *Saigon Mới*

which took the form of meetings and the public exchange of letters—continued between the two delegations until the 16<sup>th</sup> of June when a 5-point resolution was developed which established the process through which the religious symbols can be displayed in public, eliminated issues concerning religion from Decree 10, formed an investigative body to review the grievances raised by the Buddhist leaders, reaffirmed freedom of religious proselytizing and activities, and asserted firm repercussions for government cadres who were responsible for the chaos since the 5<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>66</sup> The President, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July in a public statement, further verified the administration’s commitment to resolve the Buddhist Crisis. The Interministerial Committee was made into an administrative presentative working with Buddhist leaders to “research, monitor, and resolve...any complaints relating to the enactment of the Joint Resolution.” The President further called upon members of the administration to act in accordance with the Joint Resolution.<sup>67</sup>

From late July to early August, sessions emphasized the fundamental narrative of the regime that “the government is completely reconciliatory in the Buddhist issue and have completely satisfied the demands of the Buddhist faith.”<sup>68</sup> Sessions sought to turn the discussion away from the Buddhist Crisis and back to issues of “exterminating communism” and “saving the nation.” Participants studied the Joint Resolution adopted as well as the official narrative of the regime on the Crisis. PSP sessions emphasized “freedom of religion” established in the Republican constitution and argued that “we have a responsibility to protect the Buddhist Faith, whether Buddhists or any other religion, that is our obligation because that is to protect our Constitution.”<sup>69</sup>

However, this reconciliatory attitude of the regime was short lived and contradicted activities that the regime was undertaking outside of the public eye. Despite coming to a joint resolution on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June and praised as an achievement by newspapers, a lengthy expose on the matter was delivered through the Republican Youths—a non-governmental organ controlled by Ngô Đình Nhu. A restricted document that was only circulated within the administration as a political study material, the statement by Republican Youth was designed to convey the position of the administration and convince its audience the administration was in the right despite signing with Buddhist leaders a joint declaration on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June. Claiming their “objectivity”

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6.7.1963; “Trao Đổi Văn Thư về vấn đề phật giáo giữa Hòa Thượng Thích Thiện Hoa và Phó Tổng Thống Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ” *Saigon Mới*, 6.10.1963.

<sup>66</sup> Religious symbols, particularly pertaining to Buddhism, were allowed to be flown only in conjunction with the National Flag and must 2/3 the size. “Thông Cáo Chung” in Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ Học tập các đề tài năm 1963*. “Thông Cáo Chung về Vấn Đề Phật Giáo” *Saigon Mới* 6.17.1963.

<sup>67</sup> Study materials relating to the July 18<sup>th</sup> statement argued that “Before [establishing the Interministerial Committee], the Government announced that the Government has assigned the Joint Resolution so the Government will enact it. However, if the Government alone enacts [the Resolution], then there are people who will be suspicious therefore now there is an initiative to sit down [with the Buddhist delegation] to together enact” (CV Số 3837-CDV/TT/VP1 dated 7.20.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT).

<sup>68</sup> “Biên Bản buổi học tập cấp II tại Phòng Văn Thư Tổng Nha Quan Thuế ngày 16.8.63 hồi 16g30,” Folder No. 3463, TQT.

<sup>69</sup> CV Số 3837-CDV/TT/VP1 dated 7.20.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT; see also “Thông Cáo cho tất cả các cán bộ các ngành,” Folder No. 3463, TQT; see also: “Cuộc Họp Báo của Ủy Ban Liên Phái Bảo Vệ Phật Giáo tại Chùa Xá Lợi” and “Cuộc Họp Báo của Phó Tổng Thống, Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Liên Bộ tại Hội Trường Diên Hồng ngày 2-8-1963” attachment to CV Số 14214-YTHP dated 8.14.1963 in Folder 3031, BYT, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*. These two were mandatory study documents which explicates the position given by the government in press conferences.

because the Republican Youth is “an organization of the people, not a movement of any government to blindly be a lackey for anyone” and the righteousness of their nationalist standpoint, the exposes by the Republican Youth dealt less with the actual 5 points of the resolution than it was a brutal dissection of Buddhist demands delivered to the President on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May—the fundamentals of Buddhist grievances precipitating recent political confrontations.<sup>70</sup>

The five main demands that the Buddhist delegation delivered on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May were criticized in detail presenting an argument that matters of religious persecution and discrimination were non-existent in Republican policies and actions. The Republic never prevented the flying of the Buddhist Flag. The Buddhists demand the same treatment as that of the Catholics, but, unlike the Christian religions, the structure of the Buddhist Religion is not built on a “strictly regulated” system and is loosely tied to international influences. Buddhists temples and organizations operate “individually and independently” and thus require different regulations from that of more organized religions. The Buddhists are not asking for the same treatment for the Catholics, they are in fact “demanding more special treatment than that of the Catholics.” The recent arrests are not of a religious matter, but rather a political one. These individuals are arrested because “they operate outside of the religious matter, in order to continue create disruption in the nation and is completely within the power of the government to prosecute them.” National security is raised as the reason for the selective treatment of Buddhists. Inspection of Buddhist text by the government is due to suspicion of communist infiltration and exploitation of the disorganization of the Buddhist structure. The violence that erupted against protestors on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May was not due to the government, but rather communists who used “plastic explosives” to cause harm and chaos. As argued, when it came to strict Republican laws and policies, “those righteous citizens should not be uncomfortable...if their organizations truly are righteous.”<sup>71</sup>

By August, a hardline position against the Buddhist protestors dominated, spearheaded by Ngo Dinh Nhu and his wife Nguyễn Thị Lệ Xuân. In conjunction with organizing raids against Buddhist pagodas, the official line towards the Buddhists retreated from its reconciliatory attitude to one that depicted the Buddhist delegation as corrupted by communist infiltration. On the Buddhist side, these actions led to public condemnations that the government was backtracking its signed promise in June and betraying the fundamentals of the Republic. Protests erupted once again on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August and on the 16<sup>th</sup>, another Reverend immolated himself in Hue.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August, the President declared a national curfew and martial law, giving the military full authority to enforce the measure, complete responsibility for public security, and all legal proceedings were brought through the military tribunals established in 1959.<sup>72</sup> In PSP sessions, the study of these new legal measures was made mandatory for all members of the administration and military. PSP sessions sought to combat two allegations against the regime’s

<sup>70</sup> “Cuộc Họp Báo tại Chùa Xá Lợi: Phái Đoàn Phật Giáo VN Trình Bản Nguyên Vọng Lên Tổng Thống gồm có 5 điểm chánh, 2 điểm phụ,” *Saigon Mới*, 5.19.1963

<sup>71</sup> “Thông Cáo Số 3: Tài Liệu Học Tập và Nghiên Cứu,” dated 6.26.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT. This document, belonging to the Republican Youth, was studied in the General Office of Taxation.

<sup>72</sup> Thích Nhật Từ and Nguyễn Kha, ed., *Pháp nạn Phật Giáo 1963: Nguyên Nhân, bản chất và tiến trình*, Nhà Xuất Bản Hồng Đức: Hà Nội (2013), 450 which cites the Sắc Lệnh số 84-TTP dated 8.20.1963 enacting the military curfew.

handling of the Buddhist crisis. The first was that of human rights violation, and the second was that the Republic had reversed its policies and its commitment to the Constitution. Furthermore, study sessions served to recraft the narrative of the Buddhist Crisis that paints the Buddhist movement as a predominantly a political issue rather than a religious one. Those engaged in demonstrations, immolations, and condemnation against the government were corrupted by communist influences and these activities stalled the progress that the nation had achieved in the last 9 years.

The violation of human rights was a dominant critique against the regime and had been addressed in the PSP in July which dealt with the question of “freedom of religion” and how the Republic was committed to these values. This issue was taken seriously precisely because of the conjoinment between “Human Rights” and Republican’s “Personalist” philosophy. Since 1958, every December the PSP dedicated a month to familiarize participants with the history, contents, and importance of the Declaration, and demonstrating that Republican policies respected these values while the communist North violated these precedents. Personalism, early on, was an expansion of the concept of Human Rights, “protecting not only the material aspect but also the spiritual aspects” of a person.<sup>73</sup> In 1961, with Ngo Dinh Nhu in the seat of ideological leadership, this linkage was made explicit. As argued in a general study assembly for the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants, “in order to talk about Human Rights, one must talk about Personhood. In order to guarantee Human Rights, it is obvious that the guarantee of Personhood must come first.”<sup>74</sup>

In 1962, the study of the Declaration tied the Strategic Hamlet initiative which was conceived as an actualization of Personalist values and a novel method for protecting Human Rights. In 1963, the established link between Personalism and Human Rights was utilized in PSP sessions during August and September to defend the policies of the regime. Responding to international condemnation by Asian-African nations of “human rights violations in South Vietnam” the regime moved the study of the Declaration to combat these allegations.

The issue of Human Rights in 1963 was particularly biting for the Vietnamese Republic because the accusation of violation stemmed not from Western countries but rather post-colonial nations which shared similar history, social and economic circumstances, and underdevelopment as the Republic. For half a decade, the Republic had hailed itself as the successful implementation of a novel path of development and modernity premised on the Personalist philosophy. It conceived of itself as organically allied with the non-communist yet underdeveloped and decolonializing world of Africa and Asia. In early September, 13 Asian-African member countries of the United Nations met to discuss the “violation of human rights in South Vietnam” headed by the ambassador from Sierra Leone.

Using long-established Republican interpretation of Human Rights, the assigned PSP document defended the regime in its handling of the Buddhist Crisis. The conflation between Human Rights and Personalism was utilized as a rhetorical tool which ultimately argued that because the Republic was Personalist, it could in no way violate Human Rights. As defined, “human rights entail the fundamental rights of a person.” The text argues that these human rights

<sup>73</sup> “Học Tập về bản Tuyên Ngôn Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền: Tài Liệu Số 12” dated 12.6.1958 in Folder 20030 PTTĐỊCH, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ chức học tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958.*

<sup>74</sup> “Biên bản buổi học tập đặc biệt nhân ngày kỷ niệm “Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền” do Chi Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Công An Cảnh Stats Tổ Chức Tại Phòng Nội Dịch, ngày 9-12-1961.”

were written into the very constitution of the Republic which is premised on “the belief in the transcendental value of a human being.” Human Rights, after all, was fundamental to all activities of the Republican government because of its adherence to the Personalist philosophy—a philosophy that “takes personhood as a foundation, takes human beings as has its object.” Succinctly, “when talking about Personalism we are already talking about Human Rights.”<sup>75</sup>

The actions that the regime took against those of the Buddhist faith was not a violation of Human Rights but was actually the protection of these Rights. While not denying the imprisonment of monks and Buddhist leaders, the study document argues that these imprisonments in fact were “necessary measures to protect freedom of religion and cultural rights of the Vietnamese people.” This argument is based on four premises. First, the records show that Human Rights is unevenly and incompletely implemented, even for developed countries—like American policies when it came to its black population. As argued, “people had agreed upon the fundamentals, but when actualized within a nation, opinions varied” and implemented methods contradict one another. Second, standards laid out by the Declaration of Human Rights were difficult to apply, particularly for a country as underdeveloped and plagued by national insecurity as South Vietnam. Given the circumstances of the Republic, it cannot be expected to implement human rights standards perfectly. Third, human rights are bounded to matters of “public security, peace, and prosperity.” In a politically unstable country, it is impossible to apply the standards of human rights. Thus, before inaugurating human rights, that country must first establish public order. Lastly, the Republic is faced with a communist threat, and any and all measures must be taken to prevent communist takeover of the South and ensure national security. If members of the Buddhist faith were imprisoned, it was because their activities contributed to this threat which, if manifested, would ultimately spell the end for any form of religious practice or freedom. Public security, after all, must come before human rights.<sup>76</sup>

The PSP document further criticizes the Asian-African nations which alleged human rights violations in the Republic. Sierra Leone is depicted as a “the place of leopards and lions” whose population was predominantly composed of ex-convicts and “had never seen the light of civilization.” Sri Lanka is condemned for policies against Catholics and making Buddhism its national religion. Cambodia’s Sihanouk is described as a paternalistic leader who sees his citizens as “mes infants” and “have yet to propose a program to educate the Cambodian citizens.”<sup>77</sup> According to the study document, these countries had no right to condemn the

<sup>75</sup> “Vấn Đề Tôn Trọng Nhân Quyền” attached to CV Số 153-CDV/TT/KHCT dated 9.16.1963, Folder No. 3463, TQT. Study of the International Declaration of Human Rights in September was headed by the Civic Commissariat.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> “Nước này chỉ mới được độc lập vào khoảng hai năm nay. Sierra Leone là nơi sinh sống của hùm beo và sư tử; Điều kỳ lạ là dân tộc Sierra Leone gồm một số ít dân da đen bản xứ, còn phần đông là những kẻ tù đầy đi điếm bị đầy tãi đến. Có thể nói Sierra Leone là một nơi chưa thấy ánh sáng văn minh bao giờ. Người dân sinh sống trong những điều kiện hết sức khổ sở, văn hóa không có... Tại Tích Lan, Miến Điện, Phật giáo được coi là Quốc giáo. Những tín ngưỡng tôn giáo khác không được nhìn nhận là chính thức và bị đàn áp... Vậy tự do tín ngưỡng nói ở trong bản Tuyên Ngôn Nhân Quyền Quốc Tế ở đâu? Chưa hết, người dân vô sản Tích Lan soogns trong những nơi bùn lầy nước đọng dơ dáy, không được chính quyền đối đãi đến. Những điều kiện sinh soogns của người dân Tích Lan làm mất hết phẩm giá con người. Trong lúc đó có những kẻ tuowngr giả giàu sang ngoao du trên những chiếc xe hơi bóng nhoáng! Làm sao Sir Senerat Gunewardene lại có thể nêu lên vấn đề nhân quyền tại Việt Nam Cộng Hòa khi chính nước ông đã khoogn tôn trọng nhân quyền và cũng không tìm cách tạo những điều kiện thuận lợi cho nhân

Republic of “oppressing Buddhism and violating human rights.” The allegations of these countries were not due to any real issue of human rights, but rather because these countries “had become lackeys of the communists” or were “bought out by the imperialists...[to force] the Vietnamese government to follow the path that the imperialists had already laid out.”<sup>78</sup>

The path that the Republic had chosen was that of Personalism, depicted as a philosophy that was misunderstood by the West but is yet most adapted to the political and economic circumstances of Vietnam. The allegations of human rights violations in South Vietnam was an affront to the philosophy of Personalism that the Republic supposedly prided itself upon. This matter was depicted as personally attacking Ngô Đình Nhu—the “father of Personalism”—and resulted from “resentment and jealousy” on the part of the communists and “careless foreigners.”<sup>79</sup> However, the crisis of legitimacy brought about by the Buddhist protest did not end there. Domestic critiques revolved around allegations that the regime had reversed its policies and changed its directions. The study of the declaration of national curfew in late August was designed to precisely defend the administration against this very accusation.

This accusation is seen as a “misconception” on the part of both domestic and international observers that the government was “changing its policies.” This misconception, as argued in the assigned study document, was a result of countries and individuals “falling into the influences of Communism and not yet know, or more dangerously, implementing the orders of the communists.” These countries had “fallen into the communist trap...[when they] intervened into the internal matters of Vietnam.” In the face of international condemnation, including that of the United States, the regime argued that the establishment of national curfew and martial law was not a reversal of its policies, but rather an extension of its commitment to the Republican Constitution. According to study documents, these measures by the Republic “lay completely within the dialectic of the [national] revolution and does not contradict with the will of the people that the government has the responsibility to enact.” These measures are taken to “fulfill” the promise of the Constitution by “ridding all obstacles to enacting” a government premised on “democratic rule, communal progress, and social justice.” These obstacles are the three enemies identified in 1961: communism, underdevelopment, and disunity. The establishment of the curfew, thus, is an initiative designed to combat the “minority of monks” who “utilize religion to cover up conspiracies,” wittingly or unwittingly aid the enemy, create disunity, and ultimately serve to stall the progress of the nation.<sup>80</sup>

Unlike its previous position of reconciliation, the regime now depicts the Buddhist delegation as those who “use religion for political aims.” The Buddhist Movement is condemned as causing chaos and threatening national security, corrupting the young and convincing

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dân phát triển? Quốc Vương Cao Miên Sihanouk gọi thân dân mình bằng con (mes enfants!), và chưa đưa ra một chương trình nào để giáo dục dân Cambodge” (ibid).

<sup>78</sup> “Thái độ và hành động của một số quốc gia Á Phi khi đặt vấn đề “xâm phạm nhân quyền tại Việt Nam” chỉ có thể đưa chúng ta đến một kết luận sau đây: hoặc các quốc gia này đã bị Đế Quốc mua chuộc để đá kích Chánh Phủ Việt Nam, bắt Chánh Phủ Việt Nam phải đi theo chiêu hướng mà Đế Quốc đã vạch sẵn, hoặc các quốc gia nói trên đã nhận làm tay sai cho cộng sản” (ibid).

<sup>79</sup> “Bọn Cộng Sản và bọn phiêu lưu quốc tế đã trút tất cả sự căm tức, hờn ghen của họ vào Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, đặc biệt là Ông Cố Vấn Chính Trị Ngô Đình Nhu,” quoted from “Tài Liệu Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Lời Tuyên Bỏ của Ông Cố Vấn Chính trị Ngô Đình Nhu dành cho Ông Charles Taylor, kỹ giả báo “The Globe and Mail” ở Toronto Gia Nãi Đại ngày 23-9-63, in Folder No. 3463, TQT, *Hồ Sơ HQc tập các đề tài năm 1963*.

<sup>80</sup> “Tài Liệu Hướng Dẫn Học tập Bản Tuyên Ngôn của Chính Phủ ngày 21/8/63” attachment to CV Số 6179-QT/HDHT dated 8.29.1963, in Folder No. 3463, TQT

individuals to immolate themselves, rejecting all forms of dialogue and reconciliation, and storing weapons and explosives in pagodas. Accordingly, “in the mission to protect national security...all forms of using religion for political aims must be stopped so that temples and pagodas return to their function as places of worship...[and] prayer.” Using the age-old Republican concept of “resoluteness,” the regime demanded that those within the religious order must make “resolute” their religious intentions and divorce their religious practice from that of politics and engage in “study” so that they could absorb and enact the “revolutionary direction” of the regime.<sup>81</sup>

By early September, the enactment of martial law, raids of pagodas, and the arrest of Buddhist leaders ultimately curtailed public opposition by the Buddhist community.<sup>82</sup> The regime was ready to declare political victory over the Buddhist Crisis. In *Gió Nam*'s second to last issue dated the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, the Buddhist Crisis is described as “the largest trial that our people had to face since the founding of the Personalist Republican polity.” But, through the leadership of Ngô Đình Diệm, “we have passed through the enormous storm.” At this point, the official narrative had broadened the scope of the Buddhist Crisis and depicted the political upsurge as a communist scheme that followed the “vassalization of Cambodia” and the neutralization of Laos. South Vietnam, alone, stood as the “last fortress” for the Free World in Indochina. The piece argues, “although small and was once betrayed by the Free World, [the Republic] still remains heroically determined to to combat against communism to protect its own ideals and survivability and that of the entirety of the human race which desires democracy and peace.”<sup>83</sup>

The Buddhist Crisis had delayed the 3<sup>rd</sup> election for the National Assembly originally scheduled for August of 1963 to September 27<sup>th</sup>, after the Crisis had sufficiently tempered. As noted by Penniman, this election saw a substantial increase in numbers of invalid ballots but results still heavily favored CLP-controlled organizations and those who were committed to Diem.<sup>84</sup> Diem's last speech for National Day on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October—just a week before he would be assassinated, and his regime overthrown—returned to the issue of national development, self-sufficiency, and the need to escape underdevelopment. Like the *Gió Nam* article published in September, the Buddhist Crisis was a thing of the past and the Republic has survived “the difficulties brought by the poisonous schemes of our people's enemies.”<sup>85</sup>

### *Personalism in Hiatus*

The suppression of the Buddhist protest had established some degree normalcy to the activities of government. In September, some governmental organs, like the Ministry of Health, reorganized its operating structure in accordance to the “Strategic Area” and study materials reiterated the Personalist ambitions of Chiêu Hồi. PSP sessions on the 1963 National Day

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid. Similar arguments are made by Ngo Dinh Nhu in his interview to The Globe and Mail's Charles Taylor on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September. Summarization of this interview became a study document. See “Tài Liệu Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Lời Tuyên Bố của Ông Cố Vấn Chính Trị Trong Cuộc Phỏng Vấn Dành Cho Ông Charles Taylor, Ký Giả Báo “The Globe and Mail” ở Toronto Gia Nã Đại ngày 23-9-63” circa October 1963, in Folder No. 3463, TQT.

<sup>82</sup> Sắc Lệnh Số 104-TTP dated 9.14.1963.

<sup>83</sup> “Một Thắng Lợi” *Gió Nam*, 1963(60), 3-4

<sup>84</sup> Penniman, Howard R. *South Vietnam in Elections*, p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> “Hiệu Triệu của Tổng Thống nhân ngày Quốc Khánh 26-10-1963,” attachment to CV Số 7553-QT/HDHT dated 10.25.1963, in Folder No. 3463, TQT



Presidential speech reaffirmed the victory of the regime over that of the communists during the Buddhist Crisis and details the President's plans to expand and develop the Strategic Hamlet and Chiêu Hồi initiatives.<sup>86</sup> Yet this lull in political angst in September and October of 1963 was the calm before the actual "storm." Within a month, Diệm and Nhu lay dead in the back of an armored vehicle, and the military junta led by Dương Văn Minh had seized national leadership, inaugurating the Republican Interregnum.

During the Interregnum, Personalism, so closely associated with the Diệm administration, lost any ideological hold it once had during the First Republic. State messaging and societal voices alike decried Personalism as a fanciful philosophy meant to hide the authoritarianism of the "old regime" and the repression of the Cần Lao Party. For the broad swath of the Republic, the "November Revolution" had ushered in a new era of social activism, civil critique, and political transformation to be dictated by not states and regimes, but rather a Republican civil society. Dominant during the period were demands for "True Democracy and Freedom," a narrative pushed for democratic reforms, civil rule, and social justice in juxtaposition to the "authoritarianism" of the Diệm administration.

Monumental shifts in power and influence occurred during this period. For one, the early months of the Interregnum saw the rise of political Buddhism, represented by a newly formed "Unified Buddhist Church" which relied on the Buddhist experience of state repression surrounding the 1963 Vesak holiday to condemn the "old regime," push for the excision of "old" administrators and military men from the state body, and demand for retributive "social justice" against those who had persecuted them. For another, as will be covered in the next chapter, political legitimacy shifted from state authorities to civil society, which deployed the "promise of the November Revolution" to wage demands upon Republican regimes. Often contradictorily utilized by a diverse public sphere, the Interregnum period also experienced great political instability characterized by perpetual protests, demonstrations, coups, and regime changes.

At least for the early months of the Interregnum, the formerly privileged Catholic strata were often caught in the crosshairs of the anti-Cần Lao and anti-authoritarian politics that were dominant during the period. Key individuals closely associated with the former regime—a great many Catholics—were arrested and imprisoned during the "November Revolution," including former champions of the Personalist vision like Trần Kim Tuyền, Ngô Trọng Hiếu, and Nguyễn Văn Y. Following the execution of Ngô Đình Cẩn (the youngest Ngô brother) and Phạm Văn Đông (the former intelligence head of the Central region) in May 1964, Catholics began to politically mobilize and organize to combat the radical political impulse pushed by Buddhist activists. Perpetual conflicts between these two religious groups eventually coalesced into two contending political spheres: one radical and the other conservative.

Relying on older narratives of anticommunist adamancy and anti-neutralism, the Catholics built a conservative coalition joined by anticommunist politicians, prominent nationalist parties, and religious sects. The growing influence of this "anticommunist-nationalist force" was most apparent in their opposition to the anti-Cần Lao People's National Salvation Council (PNSC) movement in late 1964 and their organized protest against the Phan Huy Quát administration in mid-1965. Catholic militancy expanded during the 1966 Struggle Movement, as the "Greater Unity Force" [*Lực Lượng Đại Đoàn Kết*] of Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh led the conservative opposition to the "sectarian" and "avaricious" Buddhist militants. Kỳ's repression

<sup>86</sup>"Ý Nghĩa Ngày 26-10," attachment to CV Số 7553-QT/HDHT dated 10.25.1963, in Folder No. 3463, TQT

of the Struggle Movement in June and July of 1966 crushed the organizational infrastructure of radical movement. By August, large swaths of their leadership had been arrested, imprisoned or defected to the communist guerrillas. Military officers who joined the rebellion faced imprisonment, demotion, and dishonorable discharge, and the Buddhist Chaplain Corp was disbanded. In the wake of this crushing blow, the Buddhist Church experienced a period of factionalism and internal strife, eventually dividing the Church into the radical wing (Án Quang faction) and the moderate one (Việt Nam Quốc Tử faction). As Buddhists politically declined, Catholics experienced political ascension. While both Catholics and Buddhists initially boycotted the Constituent Assembly elections scheduled for September 1966, acquiescence by the Thiệu-Kỳ administration to release Catholic prisoners arrested in the wake of the “November Revolution” eventually provided the justification needed for Catholics to participate. Taking 35 of the 117 seats in the Constituent Assembly, Catholics would mobilize for the National Assembly elections of 1967 and successfully seized 20 of the 60 available seats in the Upper House and 35 in the Lower House. They were joined by broad victories of conservative factions, including the Đại Việt Party and the anticommunist religious sects.

The political ascendancy of Catholics in Republican politics paralleled the rehabilitation of Ngô Đình Diệm. This rehabilitation of Diệm was, in part, due to the release of key prisoners associated with the “old regime”—a matter continually pushed by the militant Catholics throughout the Interregnum. Indeed, as part of Kỳ’s amnesty program, 9 individuals were released in commemoration of the 1966 National Day. Among those released was Trần Kim Tuyên; others, like Đặng Sỹ and Nguyễn Văn Y, had their sentences reduced to 5-years.<sup>87</sup> This broad process of rehabilitation was evidently demonstrated in the successful run of Huỳnh Văn Cao, a former Cần Lao member, who came in fourth in the National Assembly elections. By November of 1969, the Republic saw the first public gathering to commemorate Diệm’s death. In that same year, Trần Kim Tuyên—under the penname Lương Khải Minh—and Cao Thế Dũng—an instructor rural sciences—began publishing the series *How to Kill a President* (*Làm Thế Nào Để Giết Một Tổng Thống*) in the Catholic newspaper *Hòa Bình* which depicted Diệm as victim of history and American foreign policy.<sup>88</sup> Turned into a book in 1971, the political substance of the work was further reinforced with the release of the Pentagon Papers in the same year which highlighted the American role in the assassination of Ngô Đình Diệm and Ngô Đình Nhu.

As Diệm was rehabilitated, Personalism returned—though not as a state policy, but rather a political philosophy debated in public discourse. The Nhân-Xã Party—a revival of the Cần Lao Party formed in 1968—not only glorified Ngô Đình Diệm, but also propagated Personalist ideals.<sup>89</sup> Works such as *Nhận Định* (Appraisal) by Nguyễn Văn Trung in 1969 re-invoked Personalism and tied it to matters of society, education, development, and politics. However,

<sup>87</sup> SL 362/CT/LĐQG/SL cited in Đoàn Thâm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*, 199; “NINE DIEM BACKERS RELEASED BY SAIGON,” *New York Times*, Oct 27, 1966; “South Vietnam Government declares political amnesty,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 2, 1966.

<sup>88</sup> See PTTĐICH 1582, *Tài liệu sưu tầm của Nha Nghi Lễ năm 1968 v/v Tổng Thống Ngô Đình Diệm Viếng Thăm Hoa Kỳ từ ngày 05-23/5.1957*. The folder holds the original copies of *Làm Thế Nào Để Giết Một Tổng Thống*, which came out as a book in 1971 on the death of Ngô Đình Diệm. This book is widely available, though with edits. *Hòa Bình*, the news outlet published the piece in series No. 16, 1969-Jul. 19, 1971. The piece was written by Lương Khải Minh (Trần Kim Tuyên) and Cao Vị Hoàng (Cao Thế Dũng). 1970 articles in *Hòa Bình*, see PTTĐICH 4935, *Bài nói chuyện báo cáo các báo về cái chết của Tổng Thống Ngô Đình Diệm năm 1970-1971*.

<sup>89</sup> Sean Fear, “The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic: Domestic Politics and Civil Society in US-South Vietnamese Relations, 1967-1971,” Diss. Cornell University (2016), 19-58

rather than a particular agenda of modernization uniquely catered to the conditions of Vietnam, the Personalism depicted by Nguyễn Văn Trung was a moral platform towards a “form of progress that respects personhood” and values the spiritual dimensions of human beings.<sup>90</sup> And as the war dragged on, the Catholic-left would emerge on the political scene in an attempt to retrieve Personalism from the authoritarianism of the First Republic while simultaneously critiquing American materialism and its deleterious impact on South Vietnamese culture and society.<sup>91</sup>

Although Personalism would never formally re-enter the political study sessions of the South Vietnamese state, elements once emphasized under the Diệmist Personalism such as “self-reliance” [*tự lực, tự cường*], the importance of psychological change, and the unique path that Vietnam must take for modernization would make their way into the study sessions of the Second Republic. Rid of its Personalist trappings, these issues were essential to how the Thiệu Presidency negotiated the weakening of American commitments in South Vietnam and the necessities in conducting the anticommunist war. Deployed during the Second Republic was the expansion of the concept of “self-determination” [*tự quyết*]<sup>92</sup>—a concept once central to the Personalism of the First Republic. Terminologies associated with “Vietnamese Underdevelopment,” the critique of communism on “humanistic” grounds, and the urgency of economic development reflected a broader process of discursive reutilization and appropriation. Below, we turn to the Second Republican deployment of “Vietnamese Underdevelopment,” and strategies proposed by the Thiệu Presidency to ensure South Vietnamese political autonomy and development.

### *Self-Determination*

Efforts by the Thiệu Presidency to rearticulate the issue of “self-sufficiency” and “self-determination” was, in part, a byproduct of Tết Offensive in early 1968. Although the push for peace talks had been evident since 1965, it was not until April 1968 did the Republic seriously consider peace negotiations with the communist adversary. Although talks stalled for five months, the American shifts towards peace and Johnson’s halting of aerial bombardment at the end of October finally ushered in official negotiations. Developments that were not without criticism and hesitancy by the South Vietnamese government,<sup>92</sup> the Paris peace talks ultimately led to the eventual Vietnamization policy of the Nixon administration in 1969. This gradual wane in American commitment to the anticommunist war was not lost on the Republic. Indeed, within three days of Johnson’s halt in bombing raids, the Thiệu administration began sketching out a different approach to the war that emphasized “self-reliance” and the South Vietnamese responsibility in resolving their own war. Moreover, propagation of “self-reliance” served to reassure the South Vietnamese public of the viability of the anticommunist war despite the gradual retreat of American troops and military commitment. As Thiệu declared on November 2<sup>nd</sup>: “1969 must be the year of consolidation and self-reliance.”<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Nhận Định IV: Chiến Tranh, Cách Mạng, Hòa Bình*, Nam Sơn Xuất Bản (Saigon: 1969).

<sup>91</sup> Tuấn Hoàng, “Ideology in Urban South Vietnam, 1950-1975,” Diss. University of Norte Dame (2013), 466-497.

<sup>92</sup> Zubeida Mustafa, “The Paris Peace Talks,” *Pakistan Horizon* 22, no. 1(1969), 29-38.

<sup>93</sup> “Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Đọc Trước Phiên Họp Khoáng Đại của Lưỡng Viện Quốc Hội Ngày 2-11-68” attached to CV 9099/QP/BC dated 11/3/1968, PTTVNCH 29916, *Tổ Chức Học Tập Thông Điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968*.

While full-fledged political study of *tự lực tự cường* [self-reliance] did not manifest until 1970, the concept was eventually transformed into an ideological mantra propagated throughout Second Republic to address South Vietnamese capabilities in continuing the anticommunist war. Facing American retreat, one 1969 study document outlines the early vision of this “mission” for self-reliance. While acknowledging that South Vietnam could “walk but not yet run,” the piece contends that “we have nothing to fear if we see many American soldiers return home.” For one, the Tết Offensive, rather than a political defeat, was a military victory for the Republic, highlighting its “maturity” and capability to successfully defend against communist onslaught. For another, the communist failure during the Tết Offensive had left them open to attack, and provided the Republic the opportunity to seize initiative in the war. Given this opportunity, the Republic had invested in military expansion through the general draft, the aggrandization of regional and paramilitary forces, and the increase of armament which favorably positioned the Republic vis-à-vis the communist foe. As the tide of war turned, the South Vietnamese must “have faith in ourselves” and draw upon their history of self-reliance. Indeed, reliance on external support had always been temporary, and “sooner or later we always intended that it would only be we who must contend with this war.” Signaling the need for courage and acceptance of responsibility, the piece argues that the Republic must respond to American retreat with willingness to take the burden of their own war. To successfully accomplish this “mission,” the entirety of the populace must be mobilized and willing to contribute to the collective cause. The “reward” would be an “independent polity and [complete] self-determination.”

Although originating from Thiệu’s response to the leading role of the US in Paris talks that would ultimately determine his own country, the “policy of self-determination” expanded beyond the assertion for the South Vietnamese to take military responsibility for the conduct of war. Indeed, it became a guiding platform that articulates a strategic vision of the “path” ahead to reform South Vietnam into a society that was economically viable without foreign assistance while simultaneously capable of “self-defending” itself from the communist threat. This strategy would entail technologization of rural production, austerity measures, and broad militarization of South Vietnamese society. Furthermore, the strategy outlined placed tremendous emphasis on rural transformation as a basis for eventual national change.

A vision unlike that of the First Republic, the notion of self-governing hamlets that were able to produce its own weapons, economically self-providing, and capable of autonomously defending itself from communist guerrillas was revived in the 1971 program for “Self-Defending—Self-Developing Communities” [*Cộng Đồng Tự Vệ--Cộng Đồng Phát Triển*] (CĐTV—CĐPT). Indeed, reflecting the Strategic Hamlet of the First Republic, the CĐTV—CĐPT was meant to not only create a “new countryside” [*nông thôn mới*], it was also presented as a “path” of Vietnamese development that was contrasted to alternative “paths,” namely dependency on foreign aid and neutralism or “coalition government.” As if directly from the Personalist playbook, the CĐTV—CĐPT, on the one hand, was meant to form new modes of belonging, responsibilities, and behaviors that were adapted to the contemporary necessities of the anticommunist war. On the other hand, it was modeled on a belief in rural-based, communal democracy, and directly tackled the continuing threats of communism and the ills of Vietnamese Underdevelopment.

The articulation “self-reliance” situated the Republic’s ambition, political, military, and economic autonomy within a “unique” context of underdevelopment, war, and communist

infiltration—aspects of Vietnamese “reality” that, as one study document puts it, “everyone already knows.” Re-articulation of the need for Vietnamese development and progress relied on familiar concepts, terminologies, and assumptions once popularized by the Diệm administration, though rid of much of Personalist rhetoric. A 1970 study document detailing the economic program of the Second Republic provides is indicative. In the text, South Vietnam is described as an “underdeveloped country, that is also being destroyed by warfare.” Unique was that South Vietnam must “fight against communist infiltration while also having to build a nation within a context of war.” This “uniqueness” makes the issue of economic development in South Vietnam “unlike the normal economies of other countries” and imperative for it was only through economic self-sufficiency that “we can oppose infiltration, protect freedom, improve the lives of the people, and create a prosperous nation.” The economic program outlined in the 1970 document repeated familiar solutions to challenges facing the nation, including economic and military “self-reliance,” austerity and “sacrifice” of foreign consumer goods, and technologization. Proposed was an economy of “popular capitalism” [*tư bản đại chúng*] which, like the Personalist economic vision, argued for collective development based on capitalist principles and government intervention. Seeking to democratize the economy, the national focus would be placed on “aiding the weaker classes; equalizing the injustices in matters of wealth and income distribution.” This economic program would also “gradually assimilate” the rural with the urban, thus raising the living standards of the poor and creating a “large middle strata” that would directly engage with the national economy and capable of contributing to the affairs of the nation.

Similar reutilization of First Republican concepts can be seen in how study documents articulated the three broad concepts constituting Thiệu’s vision of “self-reliance”: a) self-defense [*tự phòng*], b) self-governance [*tự quản*], and c) self-providing [*tự túc*]. In study documents, these three concepts were largely deployed to assert the need for South Vietnam to achieve, respectively, military, political, and economic autonomy, and scope out the regime’s agenda to achieve these goals. Repeated was that South Vietnam must rely on “our strength” rather than foreign assistance. Militarily, South Vietnamese soldiers must be primary in carrying out the anticommunist war; politically, the Republic must attain standing in the world stage and develop in accordance to its own “path”; and economically, South Vietnam must cut imports luxury and consumer goods, increase domestic production and manufacturing, and prioritize exports. The vision was for South Vietnam to progress and survive as a nation without or only marginal external support.

These principles were also deployed to justify the reduction of the central government’s investments and responsibility in local affairs, aiding to lower national expenditures amidst declining American aid and commitments. The policy of “local partitioned governance” *địa phương phân quyền*, for example, deployed the concept of “self-governance” to articulate the state’s rationale for placing greater responsibility upon local authorities for economic and political progress. The initiative for a “new countryside” was envisioned as a national transformation of hamlets and villages into “self-producing” entities that could produce enough for its members without governmental aid and subsidies. And initiatives to expand Civil Defense Forces and implement the Phoenix Program was articulated as a means through which villages could “self-defend” against communist infiltration, allowing regular forces to take the initiative in the war. These slogans, in large part, justified

While these policies were nominally new, articulation of their purpose and intended effects relied on familiar political terminologies, frameworks, and assumptions derived from the First Republic. Indicatively, these efforts were meant to conjure a “national revolution” that would begin with the rural and make its way to the urban centers. Rooted in this vision of a rural-to-urban revolution is an assumption that efforts must first target villages or the “basic community” [*cộng đồng cơ bản*] that constitute the Vietnamese nation. If the “natural communities” was the starting point for “communal progress” under the First Republic, it was upon the “basic community” that a “new countryside” would be constructed under the Second.

Utilizing the mantra of “self-governance,” the Thiệu administration pushed for democratization of local administrative bodies, encouraging rural peasants to take initiative and “contribute their ingenuity” to the decision-making and elections within their community. Conceptually, this meant that while villages would be “self-governing” in respect to the government center, villages would also be “self-governing” in the sense that those who directly lived within those communities had responsibility to the community’s development and affairs. Indeed, as envisioned by Thiệu, this effort would “transfer the democratic regime to the basic infrastructure nation.”

Similar meshing of the personal, local, and national was utilized to articulate the concept of “self-providing. Study documents articulated a strategy in which individual rural families would achieve greater output than the year before. A family that has not yet raised pigs and chickens, for example, should attempt to do so; a family with only two livestock should aspire for 3 or 4; if only 10 acres of land are utilized, an additional 5 acres should be integrated for next season’s harvest. The government would increase land allotment and develop new measures to allow cheap and easy access to land for rural production. At the village level, citizens must take initiative to build hospitals or schools if none existed. Citizens should join cooperatives, develop proposals to the government to acquire shared machinery, such as mechanical plows, pumps, processing equipment, and other equipment for the care of livestock. These measures were intended to increase domestic production at the aggregate level. As argued, overtime, through this collective effort aimed at families and villages, “we transform the dispersed ingenuity and the efforts of individuals into the strength of the collective that increase benefits to individuals while also increasing the benefits to the nation.”

Moreover, like the First Republic, emphasis was placed on the rectification of thoughts and habits of citizens. The project for rural democratization sought to cultivate a more active citizenry which would voluntarily contribute to local affairs by empowering their role in governance. Personally, citizens must rectify their behaviors and “self-govern” themselves by “excising bad habits in their person that could hinder collective governance and cooperation.” Symbiotically conjoining the personal, local, and national, study documents that citizens must be made “aware that self-governance is a right and duty in relation to national governance, directly aligned with the path of democracy.”

The new agenda stressed rural education and raising of “civic aptitude” *dân trí*. Viewed as the most economically and politically underdeveloped sector of South Vietnam, rural peasants were depicted as perpetually living “in conditions of illiteracy and ignorance,” lacking political outlook, and are not yet capable of “conceiving what is freedom and democracy.” Material, cultural, and intellectual deprivation prevents the peasants from “enthusiastically responding” to the ideals and programs of the Republican government, and, lacking national consciousness, peasants were incapable of appraising their responsibilities and benefits when it comes to the

affairs of the nation. This state of intellectual and political “underdevelopment” makes the rural population easy prey for communist exploitation and propaganda which would ultimately destroy any faith the rural population had in the national government. Similar to the First Republic, the assumption was that transformation of economic culture could in turn contribute to change in the political and intellectual culture of the peasantry. By generating surplus, economically linking urban and rural areas, and creating new opportunities for rural citizens, the Republican administration believed that the culture, political intellect, and activities in villages can be changed. Economic transformation, thus, would not only allow South Vietnam to become “self-sufficient,” but it would also be the basis upon which to increase the living standards of the rural class and ward against communist infiltration and influence.

Following the signings of the Paris Peace Accords, the slogans of self-reliance were far less apparent as the Republic sought to capture the narrative of the peace resolution and ceasefire. At least early on, however, a number of study documents did emphasize economic and democratic progress as the Accords promised a period of peace. Furthermore, with the removal of American combat troops from South Vietnam, the political need for the Republic to assert “self-determination” and political autonomy waned. While the tripartite “self-defense,” “self-production,” and “self-governance” were no longer topics of entire study documents, matters turned to the construction of post-war South Vietnam and alternative sources of foreign assistance, particularly the ASEAN countries. However, as hostilities quickly returned and direct negotiations stalled in La Celle Saint Cloud, these themes were marginalized for staunch anticommunist assertion and the need for the South to return to conduct of war. As the Thiệu administration faced allegations of corruption, study documents turned to themes of economic development and the necessity of a “clean” polity, though any allusions to the “self-reliance” mantra which had once dominated South Vietnamese politics were superficial at best.

### *Conclusion*

Personalism as a formal, nation-building philosophy had died out since the collapse of the First Republic. However, as demonstrated above, aspects of the “Vietnamese Underdevelopment” narrative continued to shape the political thinking of Republican state-builders long into the Second Republic. In tandem with those problems of economic poverty, “political aptitude,” and national progress, solutions once proffered under Personalism continued to be reinvented in new forms. The language of “self-determination,” originally instituted in the political study sessions of the First Republic, was a political mantra that guided the nation-building policies of the Thiệu presidency. Core to Personalism and subsequent frameworks for nation-building, the molding of an active, anticommunist citizenry was emphasized as the foundational goal for achieving a politically autonomous, economically prosperous, and “developed” Vietnamese nation-state. While such philosophy guided the implementation of the PSP, it was also guided by a host of policies targeting not only the economic transformation of a nation, but also the successful prosecution of the anticommunist war. Counterinsurgent-cum-development initiatives like the Strategic Hamlet or Thiệu’s attempt to create a “new countryside” are indicative how these frameworks played out in policy.

In contrast to the Geneva Narrative or Anti-Neutrality, the discursive legacy of Vietnamese Underdevelopment upon Vietnamese exile politics was more scattered and nonlinear. Not only is the concept of personalism [nhân vị] rarely invoked in Vietnamese America despite the rehabilitation of Ngô Đình Diệm in the community’s collective memory,

only aspects of the original emphases on “natural community” or “communal progress” are retained. Nevertheless, Vietnamese Americans continue to view Vietnam through the lens of “underdevelopment.” Rather than blaming such problems on colonialist or feudal vestiges—or even the communist war—this “underdevelopment” is now blamed on communist governance itself. The inability of contemporary Vietnam to rise above its “Third World” status stands as justification for opposing communist policies as universally detrimental to the “development” of a modern nation. At the very least, that particular strand of critique within the original narrative of Vietnamese Underdevelopment was retained.

The legacies of the narrative, however, is better exemplified through the persistent concern with matters of human rights. As the International Declaration of Human Rights had been core to the Republican anticommunist discourse since the early days of the Republic, it continues to be a key mobilizing focal point for anticommunist organizations in Vietnamese America. More marginal legacies are seen in relation to the “spiritual” dimensions of the person. Polemic essays during the “Homeland Restoration” Movement of the 1980’s, for example, articulated the need for political struggle as opposed to “material” struggle. As one text argues, “In the recent war we must say that we placed too much faith into the power of weapons, power of the material thus did not emphasize the work of mobilizing and leading the people to participate in the collective struggle...we lacked a singular political direction...unable to create a unified body, soldiers did not unify their thoughts, unify their standpoint.”<sup>94</sup> More recently, the idea of “spirit” is deployed to articulate not the transformation of thoughts and values, but rather the retention of those deemed authentically Vietnamese. In a 1990 textbook for Vietnamese-language classes, for example, stories on the landscape and geographic beauty of Vietnam are utilized to impart upon students “the philosophical morality of the Vietnamese people...in hopes of aiding them in the life in the United States while retaining the Vietnamese spirit in thoughts, actions, so that in the future they become youths with moral, clean, and strong character.”<sup>95</sup>

Perhaps explained by the vilification of Personalism during the Interregnum (thus discontinuity of use), the influences of these concepts in the political thinking of Vietnamese Americans are less pronounced than those that dealt directly with opposition to communism. Nevertheless, scatterings of these notions remain, though they lack the ideological cohesiveness evident in the previous two narratives discussed in Part II of this dissertation. However, like the two previous narratives, Vietnamese Underdevelopment did persist—if inconsistently—across the Republican era, manifesting itself under diverse regimes to inform the politics and policies of the Republic. Similar to previously discussed narratives, Vietnamese Underdevelopment was deployed to serve the interests of those in power, legitimizing specific policies, justifying forms of social control, and reinforcing a regime’s claim to rule. It, too, ideologically justified the anticommunist national project, though its justification was squarely premised on goals of modernization and development rather than ideological adamancy or caricature of the communist enemy. Though somewhat divergent from the theoretical trajectory discussed in the Geneva or Anti-Neutralist narratives, the core argument that discursive continuity is a product of perceived utility and relevance is maintained in the case of Vietnamese Underdevelopment. The narrative

<sup>94</sup> “Xây Dựng Một Lực Lượng Vũ Trang,” *Nguyệt San Người Việt Tự Do*, (1981).

<sup>95</sup> Nguyễn Thị Tuyết Long and Hoàng Thị Châu An, *Địa Lý-Thắng Cảnh Nước Việt Nam*, (Nguyễn Thị Tuyết Long, 1990), 3.



provides another dimension to the complex discourse of Republican anticommunism. Despite its irregularities and divergence, it remains a core aspect of Republican political thinking, nonetheless.

PART III

TỪ ĐỘC TÀI ĐẾN DÂN CHỦ (FROM DICTATORSHIP TO DEMOCRACY)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Title borrowed from Trần Thúc Linh, “Từ Độc Tài Đến Dân Chủ,” *Chính Luận*, May 27, 1965.

Cuộc chiến còn nhiều cam go đòi hỏi long kiên trì, sáng suốt, tận tụy trung thành với quốc gia, dân tộc của mỗi người. Người dân VN chắc chắn sẽ có cuộc sống tự do, dân chủ thực sự, thịnh vượng thực sự, không còn kẻ bóc lột giữa người với người, mà bây giờ kẻ bóc lột chính là bọn CSVN cầm quyền / The fight continue to have many trials demanding from each person persistence, lucidity, and loyal devotion to the nation, the people. The people of Vietnam undoubtedly will acquire a free life, true democracy, true prosperity, no longer will there be exploitation between person and person, but, as of now, the exploiters are the Vietnamese Communists who hold power.

- Nguyễn Minh Chánh, *Tập San Biệt Động Quân*  
Westminster, CA (2015)

Việt Nam, quốc gia vùng trái độn giữa hai quyền lực thế giới, chưa bao giờ đứng trước một chọn lựa sinh tử như hôm nay. Một người có trách nhiệm với tương lai đất nước, dù cá nhân có mang một thiên kiến chính trị nào, cũng phải biết thức tỉnh, biết đặt quyền lợi dân tộc trên, biết chọn hướng đi thích hợp với đà tiến văn minh dân chủ của thời đại, chấm dứt việc cấy vào nhận thức của tuổi trẻ một tinh thần bạc nhược, đầu hàng / Vietnam, a country within a region of contest between two world powers, has never faced a decision of life and death as today. As a person with responsibility towards the future of the country, whether that person hold a political bias of any form, must be awake, must know to place the benefits of the people above, know to choose the path most adapted to the momentum of democratic progress of the time, and cease implanting the perception amongst the youth a spirit of weakness and surrender.

- Trần Trung Đạo, *Tập San Tân Đại Việt*  
(2019)

Mục đích thứ hai là vận động các Dân Biểu và Thượng Nghị Sĩ Mỹ đồng loạt cài điều kiện nhân quyền vào cuộc thương thảo giữa Mỹ và VN hiện đang tiến hành liên quan TPP / The second purpose is to mobilize the American Representatives and Senators to jointly set conditions of human rights into the discussion between American and Vietnam currently proceeding related to the TPP

- Nguyễn Đình Thắng, *RFA*  
Virginia (2014)

Dân Chủ không bao giờ là tội mà những thế lực độc tài đang hãm hại nền Dân Chủ mới là tội đồ muôn đời của Nhân Dân / Democracy is never a sin rather it is the dictatorial forces currently harming the foundations of Democracy that have eternally sinned against the people.

- Tân Phong, “Khi Dân Chủ Là Có Tội,” *Việt Tân*  
(2018)

## INTRODUCTION

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1965, the Psychological Warfare Commissioner, Đinh Trình Chính, sent out a communique requesting all governmental and civil organs to “enact” a “Discussion Movement” *phong trào hội thảo*. This “Discussion Movement” was, on the one hand, the revival of the Political Study Program that had existed during the First Republic. This “Discussion Movement,” on the other hand, was inaugurated as a core aspect of a generalized “movement [to ensure] nationwide participation in efforts to save the country.” Like the PSP of the First Republic, study sessions were to be organized according to their respective province, district, or commune—each “discussion” unit to range from 20 to 50 individuals. The new program requested that administrative organs bloc out an hour and a half per week in dedication to “discussion.” Emphasized in the communique was that each discussion must be “open, free, democratic” while avoiding “brainwashing, insensitivity.” Taking on the role of what was the First Republic’s Information Ministry, the Ministry of Psychological Warfare would be responsible for the distribution of “discussion” materials. The individual administrative offices would be responsible for organizing and writing up regular reports for each session.<sup>2</sup>

For the last 20 months, a systematic, nation-wide program of ideological indoctrination similar to what the PSP was under the First Republic was non-existent in the South. While the regimes that followed Diệm continued pacification and psychological warfare efforts, these were largely focused on rural communities—and even then, they were haphazard at best. The continual change of governments, political crises, and social upsurge in the cities had greatly hampered South Vietnamese counterinsurgency efforts.<sup>3</sup> War weariness was widespread and evident. The influx of American dollars had devalued the South Vietnamese piastre so greatly that food inflation was up 34% in July of 1965 from the year prior.<sup>4</sup> Prices skyrocketed for basic food stock such as rice, beef, and pork as well as luxury items and even lottery tickets.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the instability of political conditions in South Vietnam drove black market speculations pushing the value of South Vietnamese currency even further downward. By February of 1966, black market prices went up to 170, more than doubling its official exchange rate.<sup>6</sup> In late 1964, a series of storms hit Central Vietnam causing tremendous damage to not only property, but also human life. Following the disasters, guerrilla forces made gains in the provinces. The chaos of war in the countryside, natural disasters, and overall economic decline had brought almost an additional 800,000 refugees into the cities.<sup>7</sup> In virtually all matters, things looked dire for the anticommunist war.

The re-inauguration of the PSP in June of 1965 was part of a wider attempt by a new administration to retrieve war initiative, stabilize political and social conditions in society, and restore some modicum of government control within a country that was quickly spiraling into

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<sup>2</sup> CV 3493/BTLC/VP dated 6-25-1965, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29589.

<sup>3</sup> Ahern, Thomas L. Jr., *Vietnam Declassified: The CIA and Counterinsurgency*, (The University Press of Kentucky: 2010), 61-67.

<sup>4</sup> “Inflation Threatens Ky Regime,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Nov 1, 1965

<sup>5</sup> “Ky Is Tough, But Profiteers Thrive,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 9, 1965

<sup>6</sup> In 1965, 135 Vietnamese piastre exchanged for 1 USD on the black market while the official conversion rate was only 73:1 “No. 2 Problem: Saigon: Economically Critical,” *Boston Globe*, Feb 22, 1966

<sup>7</sup> “CABINET RESHUFFLE IN VIETNAM,” *The Guardian*, Feb 22, 1966

political, social, and economic chaos. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1965, the civil administration of Dr. Phan Huy Quát handed power back to the military—then led by Maj. Gen. Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. A new military-led administration was formed. Air Commodore Nguyễn Cao Kỳ was selected as the Executive Commissioner whose administrative role mirrored that of a premier. A “war cabinet” comprised Kỳ’s administration and served as the executive arm of a “Directorate”—the supreme national organ—that was composed entirely of military men. In the transfer of power, the administration of Phan Huy Quát declared that “national structures and institutions [of the country] were no longer appropriate for the current situation” and a new administration was needed to cope with the “urgent situation” in South Vietnam.<sup>8</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ was inaugurated as “Executive Commissioner” of the new military-led government and presented a 26-point program. That program laid out goals to “reorganize the governing mechanisms to be appropriate for the time of war,” strengthen the South’s military capabilities, and “create favorable conditions for long-term social reform.”<sup>9</sup>

While the political and military conditions of South Vietnam had clearly deteriorated since the final days of the First Republic, the ideological discourse in the South, in fact, had developed, expanded, and transformed itself to incorporate not just anti-communist or anti-neutralist ideals, but also that of democracy, social justice, and civil liberties. Indeed, the Kỳ administration actually stood in stark contrast to the 4 governments that came before it. For one, it was a return to military rule after some 7 months of civil governance. For another, the new military leadership made no promises for democracy or civil liberties and argued that these were “necessary sacrifices” in the context of the ongoing war.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the first “discussion” material assigned for the newly revived PSP was precisely that 26-point program. Entitled “Circumstances and Duty in the New Period,” the document was built upon the various speeches delivered by Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ during their assumption of power and sought to explain not only the new national program, but also the rationale behind it.<sup>11</sup>

According to the document, the November Revolution was a moment of enthusiastic fervor during which the citizenry “placed complete faith into that of revolutionary leaders and willingly participated in all the activities of the state.” However, 20 months had passed and the “people have seen that the revolution had failed due to abusive or incompetent entities.” Those who “claim the title of revolution” demanded the people to build and sacrifice while they “fatten” themselves.<sup>12</sup> Those who had “goodwill” *thiện chí*, on the other hand, lacked “firmness thus was unable to resolve the chaos in leadership.” The “darkness” brought about by the “House of Ngô” only became darker. The military—“the force that led the November Revolution”—had returned power to a civilian regime but now must “accept the leadership of the nation....due to the special circumstances” of the nation. The Fatherland was in peril, and it was not time to hand power to “adventurous politicians to conduct experiments...[and] that we [the Vietnamese

<sup>8</sup> “Tuyên Cáo của Quốc Trưởng Chủ Tịch Hội Đồng Quốc Gia Lập Pháp và Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ VNCH,” *Chính Luận*, June 13, 1965.

<sup>9</sup> “Báo Cáo về Tình Hình và Nhiệm Vụ,” *Chính Luận*, June 22, 1965.

<sup>10</sup> “Hiệu Triệu Quốc Dân của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia (Ngày 14-6-65),” *Chính Luận*, June 22, 1965.

<sup>11</sup> “Tài Liệu Học Tập: Tình Hình và Nhiệm Vụ Trong Giai Đoạn Mới,” *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT, Fold. 3726.

<sup>12</sup> *đục nước béo cò* [literally “digging for water, fatten the crane”; to mean abusing the labor of those who “dig for water” while leaders—the “crane”—got fat].

people] have had enough of these experiments.” The document called upon the people to “temporarily cease grandiose activities, temporarily sacrifice superficial rights to ensure guaranteeable rights of the future.” It was only the army that could stabilize the chaotic situation, “save the nation,” because this army was not a “tool of individuals who scheme for political power but is an Army of the people and only knows to serve the Fatherland.”<sup>13</sup> The Kỳ administration casted previous administrations as “demagogic” *mị dân*: “to satisfy the people yearning for freedom and democracy, the past regimes had applied a policy of demagoguery with the slogan of democracy but in reality, is a superficial democracy, without responsibility, a form to hide the abusive desire of those in power.” And unlike the previous regime, the new administration “is not hesitant to declare a temporary...sacrifice of what is democracy in form such as general elections or a national assembly...[because] the circumstances have not yet allowed a truly democratic path.” In such a circumstance, democratic rights will be limited “for the ultimate privilege of the nation. The new administration would seek a sustainable democratic future, rather than “cloak what is democracy only on the outside” in the present.<sup>14</sup>

Part III of this dissertation will seek to document the historical process that led up to this point of ideological reversal. This narration is important in that despite the attempt of the Kỳ administration to hamper the societal demands for democracy, freedom, and civil governance, these ideals will eventually come to haunt the military administration, resulting in the largest social upsurge of the Interregnum years. By May of 1966, street battles raged between Buddhist and student demonstrators against that of military forces loyal to the regime. By September, elections for the Constituent Assembly was underway and in April of 1967, the rule of the Directorate came to an end, inaugurating the age of the Second Republic.

For those 20 months of “demagoguery,” the ideological values that eventually toppled the Kỳ administration evolved and coexisted with older ideals of anticommunism and anti-neutralism. This coevolution merged the demands of democracy, freedom, civil governance, and social justice with that of anticommunism in such a way that it redefined the political purpose of the Vietnamese Republic. Indeed, it was not enough to simply wage war against communism, the Republic must actualize “True Democracy and Freedom,” establish democratic institutions, and redress social injustices—ideals and values that were depicted as juxtaposed to the authoritarianism and repression of the “old” Diêmist regime. This process of ideological transformation evident during the interregnum years was a product of a changing political landscape that shifted ideological leadership away from that of the state to the civil leaders of Buddhism, Catholicism, the various nationalist political parties, and student groups. New values and new ideas did not stem from the state, but rather from these civil-societal groupings which competed amongst themselves for political influence while contesting the legitimacy of the various administrations that came to power. Social upheavals led to the collapse of one regime after another which, in the eyes of the Republican civil society, had failed at delivering on promises of democratic representation, social justice and civil rule, or failed at effective prosecution of the anticommunist war.

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<sup>13</sup> “Tài Liệu Học Tập: Tình Hình và Nhiệm Vụ Trong Giai Đoạn Mới,” *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT, Fold. 3726.

<sup>14</sup> “Tài Liệu Học Tập: Tình Hình và Nhiệm Vụ Trong Giai Đoạn Mới,” *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT, Fold. 3726.

While much of the literature had attributed this political turbulence to the Buddhists,<sup>15</sup> demands for democracy, social mobilization, and political activism were evident in virtually every social grouping. Journalists, in particular, took up their role as agitator for democratic demands and the newspaper, as one contemporary author contended, evolved into a thing of “political purpose.”<sup>16</sup> Catholics organized into a political force which jostled for influence through their various militant fronts like the “Central Committee for Catholic Struggle” or the “Greater Unity Force.” Religious sects like the Cao Đài and the Hòa Hảo, historically prominent revolutionary parties like the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng and the Đại Việt, and student-led organizations re-established themselves as political forces and, too, contributed to this demand for democracy and civil rule. The terms “democracy” and “freedom” became universally shared by civil-societal blocs, merged with the older values of anticommunism and anti-neutralism, and perpetuated the ideological lifespan of pre-established narratives.

The historical development of civil discourse across the Interregnum Period (Nov. 1, 1963-Oct. 31, 1967) can be organized according to the ideological and political intentions that shaped demonstrations and protests that preceded the removal of each administration. A stylized rendition is demonstrated in the graph below.

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<sup>15</sup> In the few works that actually mention some aspect of politics in the South Vietnamese civil society, scholarship on this period from both the left and the right give near exclusive attention to the Buddhist activities during this period. See from the left: Robert J. Topmiller, *The Lotus Unleashed: The Buddhist Peace Movement in South Vietnam, 1964-1966*, (University of Kentucky, 2002); From the right: Mark Moyar, *Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954-1965*, (Cambridge University Press, 2006). The vast majority of the scholarship, however, prioritized the power struggles and developments in the South Vietnamese military—seen as the near exclusive power holders in South Vietnam during this period. In K.W. Taylor’s new anthology of Vietnamese History, the most attention was given to the Buddhist-led upheaval in 1966, completely ignoring the massive developments in civil politics that traces back to November of 1963 (K. W. Taylor, *A History of the Vietnamese*, [Cambridge University Press, 2013]. 590-601)

<sup>16</sup> Vũ Hạnh, “100 năm báo chí VN: báo chí hôm nay,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 217 (Jan. 15, 1966), 55-62.

Table 3: Historical Renditions of Regime Changes During Republican Interregnum.

Period	Dates	Prime Minister	Ideological/Political Demands	Main Group(s)	Catalyzing event
<i>Military Rule</i>	Nov. 1, 1963-Jan.30, 1964	Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ	Anti-Neutrality	Students	France's recognition of the People's Republic of China
	Jan. 31-Aug. 25, 1964 <sup>17</sup>	Nguyễn Khánh	Anti-Authoritarianism/ Civil Rule/ Anti-Cần Lao	Students and Buddhists	The Vũng Tàu Charter
<i>Interim</i>	Aug. 27-Oct.27, 1964	Non-existent	Anti-Cần Lao versus stronger Anticommunist Policies	People's National Salvation Council versus conservative groups	Forced resignation of Fr. Cao Văn Luận as Dean of Huế University
<i>Civilian Rule</i>	Oct. 30, 1964-Jan. 27, 1965 <sup>18</sup>	Trần Văn Hương	Cabinet Change/ Anti-Repression	Students and Buddhists	Resignation of Nguyễn Xuân Chữ
	Feb. 16, 1965-June 12, 1965	Phan Huy Quát	Stronger Administration/ anti-peace movements	Catholics, religious minorities, and nationalist parties	Emergence of peace organizations
<i>The Directorate</i>	June 12, 1965-Apr. 1, 1967	Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (Executive Committee)	Anti-authoritarianism/ Civil Rule/ End to War	Students and Buddhists	Removal of Maj. Gen. Nguyễn Chánh Thi from military position

<sup>17</sup> August 16<sup>th</sup> inaugurated the Vũng Tàu Charter which would last 9 days before it was scrapped. From August 25<sup>th</sup> to October 30<sup>th</sup>, grounds were laid for a civil administration. The period was first headed by a "Triumvirate" composed of three high generals: Dương Văn Minh, Trần Thiện Khiêm, and Nguyễn Khánh. An economist, Nguyễn Xuân Oánh was named acting Prime Minister. The resignation of Khiêm forced Khánh to rename Dương Văn Minh as Head of State. By September 9<sup>th</sup>, a High National Council—composed of elderly notables—was formed with Dương Văn Minh as Chairman to draft a new provisional constitution. Phan Khắc Sửu was named Head of State on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October. He named Trần Văn Hương as Prime Minister.

<sup>18</sup> During the period from Jan 28-Feb 15, Nguyễn Xuân Oánh was once again named acting Prime Minister until Phan Huy Quát was selected as Prime Minister. A failed military coup on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February provided the pretext for the Young Turks led by Nguyễn Cao Kỳ to oust Khánh from military leadership. He was sent abroad as a "roving ambassador."



Each of these political movements can be traced to key moments which catalyzed social upsurge. While these catalyzing events were not the sole cause of regime collapse, they are analytically significant due to how they relate to major precipitating developments within the Republican civil society. Each of these major social upsurges during the Interregnum not only reshaped the political landscape of South Vietnam, they also further reinforced civil-societal demands for democracy and refined what that “democracy” would ultimately look like. Ultimately, these upheavals integrated a novel vision for South Vietnamese democracy into the already existing Republican anticommunist discourse. By the start of the Second Republic in 1967, democracy and anticommunism were conceptually inseparable. While national politics in South Vietnam gradually shifted to conservative voices who emphasized militarism and national security at the cost of civil liberties, the demand and vision of a liberal, democratic society pushed by the Vietnamese left never disappeared. These demands, however, were negotiated and melded into calls to attend to the social and civil components of the anticommunist war effort.

The following are four chapters which will chronologically trace these moments of political upheaval and discursive transformations. The first is a brief theoretical chapter to provide a political framework to conceptualize the politics of the Interregnum. This chapter, firstly, explains why it was that civil society—rather than the state—took on the mantle of ideological leadership during the Interregnum years. Secondly, it defines what this project means by a “Republican civil society.” Third, it draws upon sociological literatures introduced at the beginning of this dissertation to develop a theoretical historical model for how the “Republican civil society” shaped, defined, and perpetuated Republican anticommunism. And finally, the chapter will briefly discuss the historical data employed to craft Part III of the dissertation.

The second chapter focuses on the first era of military rule under Dương Văn Minh and Nguyễn Khánh. It demonstrates how the narratives of anti-neutralism and democracy were utilized by different cohorts of civil society to make demands upon the Republican state and, while doing so, perpetuates narratives derived from the First Republic while integrating new ideals of “democracy” and “civil rule” into the South Vietnamese political conception of anticommunism. The third chapter focuses on the era of civil governance. It highlights the ascension of the Catholics and historically-prominent nationalist parties during a period of growing concerns over the conduct of the anticommunist war and the “excesses” of the “November Revolution.” This age of civil rule demonstrates how old narratives on the Geneva Accords and anti-neutralism are reutilized by different societal groups within a context of political instability—marked by seemingly unending coups—and the rise of “peace movements” which served to restructure and redefine “revolution” and “democracy” within the anticommunist Republic. The last chapter explores the restoration of the PSP within a political environment of increasing conservatism. It demonstrates how the military-led administration of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ utilized First Republican narratives as well as the language of democracy forged during previous upheavals to justify its rule. The last chapter concludes with the final Buddhist-led upheaval of the Interregnum and demonstrates the political consolidation of staunch anticommunist groupings in the elections of 1966 and 1967. Although it was the Buddhists who led the demand for democratic institutions through much of the Interregnum, it was their political rivals who would ultimately benefit when those institutions finally established.

CHAPTER 6: POLITICAL SCHEMATIC OF THE INTERREGNUM

In February of 1966, *The Guardian* writes that South Vietnam was “hardly a nation” and “more a tangle of tribes.” As justification, the piece points to the endemic political divisions from a host of civil societal groupings from “jungle tribes and sects” to the “traditional antipathies between North and South, between Catholics and Buddhists, and the struggles for power within each of the groupings.” Apart from the implicit orientalism, the article further casted the democratic project in South Vietnam as an American endeavor rather one pushed by the citizens of the Republic. It was the Americans who “persuade[d] Saigon Governments to make progress towards democratic forms of government.” It was the Americans who sought to “institute social reform,” and it was the Americans who pushed to “liberalise the regime by bringing in civilians.” These *American* efforts had been “consistently thwarted,” even when Americans had to use “threats to withhold military and economic aid.”<sup>1</sup> Far from “traditional,” much of the political cleavages—particularly between Catholics and Buddhists—that emerged during the Interregnum were a consequence of a newly emerging civil society and the challenges that came with realizing visions of “True Democracy and Freedom.” For the South Vietnamese, that vision encompasses the promises inherent in the “November Revolution.” And far from being solely an *American* project, it was the South Vietnamese themselves who dreamt that vision of Democracy, who mobilized and pushed in the name of that vision, for civil rule, for “anti-authoritarianism,” and—although fragmented and at times chaotic—it was the South Vietnamese who “took it to the streets” and conjured upheavals to wage demands upon the State.

In the immediate days following the collapse of the First Republic, the South Vietnamese society turned attention towards the issue of “Democracy.” It was from the debates, conversations, journalistic articles, and political treaties published and articulated within a newly liberated press that new values of what the Vietnamese Republic would be was widely disseminated. The assassination of Ngô Đình Diệm and the end of the First Republic was not seen as a coup in the South Vietnamese eyes. It was a “Revolution”—a mobilization of different groups of society which joined with the military to topple a despised, authoritarian regime. With the “November Revolution” as a focal point, different social groupings mobilized and organized around the “promise” of “True Democracy and Freedom” seen as inherent in that revolution. From those early months after the collapse of the First Republic emerged what this dissertation calls the “Republican civil society.”

Throughout the Interregnum, several attempts had been made to articulate the political dynamics of the period. Nguyễn Khánh—who held the position of Premier from January to August of 1964—once described that there were “five wars” in South Vietnam. The first, quite obviously, was the war against the communists. However, within that war were other “wars” marked by conflict of “generals against generals, civilian ministers against the military, the Buddhists against the Roman Catholics and students and intellectuals against the Government.”<sup>2</sup> Đặng Văn Sung—the editor of the esteemed *Chính Luận* newspaper—ranked the political forces of South Vietnam in September of 1964: the preeminent were the army and religions, student and workers had some power, and nationalist parties (fraught by infighting and lack of organization) had no power. They were, nevertheless, considered a political bloc.<sup>3</sup> In January of 1965, Nguyễn Hữu Cồ—a Lt. Gen. who then commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Corps—argued that there “4

<sup>1</sup> “S. Vietnam hardly a nation, more a tangle of tribes,” *The Guardian*, Feb 7, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> “War Within War in Vietnam,” *New York Times*, Aug 27, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> “Từ Thượng Hội Đồng Quốc Gia đến Hội Đồng Cố Vấn Quốc Gia,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 21. 1964.

important forces” in the South Vietnamese political arena: “religion, the army, politicians, and foreigners” as well as an “anti-foreigner movement” then existing in the Central Region.<sup>4</sup>

These depictions demonstrate the diverse and decentralized nature of politics and power following the collapse of the First Republic. Political influence did not exclusively belong to the State. Rather, different groups within the South Vietnamese society had emerged to push for what they believe the Vietnamese Republic should be. Indeed, following the collapse of the First Republic, groups outside of the Republican state saw themselves as having political aspirations and interests that were not necessarily the same as that of the national leadership. From that vision, scholars, politicians, and journalists pushed for a form of politics in which societal forces would pressure those in power to adhere to given promises and the “just” demands emanating from the people. This framework which emphasized “oppositional” *đổi lập* politics derived from the way in which the recent past is remembered. The promises of the First Republic—to respect “personhood,” to establish democracy, to provide freedom—were seen as betrayed, particularly during the Buddhist Crisis in May of 1963. Those “values,” it was argued, had to be restored and actualized and it was society—rather than the State—that would ensure that this actualization occurred.

Beyond the decentralization of political authority, the collapse of the First Republic also generated a new “narrative” that centered on “True Democracy and Freedom” *Dân Chủ Tự Do Thật Sự*. Dương Văn Minh—Chairman of the first Revolution Military Council (RMC)—had once declared that “Democracy and Freedom” were the “most reliable weapons for victory over communism.” In its assumption of national power, the RMC promised that it would work towards an “elected administration” and lay the foundations for “future democracy.”<sup>5</sup> The RMC promised to “bring back to the people freedom and democracy,” and such a promise was early on seized upon by journalists who experienced a liberation of the press following the November Revolution.<sup>6</sup> In a famous manifesto written by three young journalists—Chu Tử (affiliated with *Dân Việt*), Hiếu Chân (*Tự Do*), and Từ Chung (*Ngôn Luận* and then *Chính Luận*)—the authors decried the distorted role of journalism under the Diệm era as those who “claimed themselves to be...fighting for Democracy, Freedom and the liberation of the person” were instead induced into serving the “Ngô Family clique.” The “revolution,” the authors argued, “had only just begun.” They called upon journalists to “‘purify from the inside,’ bring all their soul and energy to the service of righteousness.” It was a call for the restoration of the role of the press—one that had been debased under the former regime.<sup>7</sup> Similar adamancy would be reiterated by different societal groups as the Military Interregnum grew on.

“Righteousness” *chính nghĩa* was the order of the day. A term originating from the First Republic, “righteousness,” however, took on a different meaning after the collapse of the Diệm administration. A vague word of diffused meaning, the concept is perhaps best conceptualized by Đặng Văn Sung who saw it as the “psychological insight” *thấu triết tâm lý* that defines a struggle. In other words, “righteousness” answered the question of “why we fight.” For the author, that “psychological insight” was dynamic—changing in accordance to the demands of the people and the historical circumstances surrounding a struggle.<sup>8</sup> Yet, if the definition of “righteousness” was everchanging, who gets to determine its definition at any particular moment

<sup>4</sup> “Đại Diện Phật Giáo, Công Giáo, Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo và Hội Đồng Quân lực vừa ký,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 18, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> Nguyễn Ngu Í, “Khúc Quanh Lịch Sử,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 165 (Nov. 1963), 90-92.

<sup>6</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 219: “Temporary Charter No. 1, 4 November 1963.”

<sup>7</sup> This piece was originally printed in *Ngôn Luận* on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November and was reprinted in *Bách Khoa*, Is. 1965 (Nov. 1963), p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> Đặng Văn Sung, “Thử Tìm Hiểu Bài Tính Cách Mạng Việt Nam,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 25, 1964.

in time? On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, in its regular editorial column, *Tự Do* sought to answer the question of “who will carry the torch of righteousness.” For *Tự Do*, that “torch” was being carried by the military.<sup>9</sup> However, as the Military Interregnum grew on, different political components began competing over that “torch.” In a sense, to hold that “torch” would allow one to not only define the mannerism of the “revolution,” but also what anticommunism, progress, “social justice” and “democracy” ultimately meant.

The politics of the Interregnum perhaps can be best understood through that contest over that “torch of Righteousness”—the power to define the meaning of national struggle, or the purpose of the Vietnamese Republic. In that contest for interpretative control, there were key social groupings that held political sway. And these groups which participated in that contest are what constitutes this dissertation’s conception of the “Republican civil society.” That “civil society,” on the one hand, saw itself as juxtaposed to the State—identified as the administrative regime in the position of national authority. That “civil society,” on the other hand, is quite restrictive and is largely isolated to those who had the means and methods to actually articulate demands and wage struggle against that State, as well as compete against other groupings. The “Republican civil society,” thus, is confined to a mostly urban population that exists in the country’s Capitol. As the Military Interregnum grew on, other urban centers also entered that interpretative contest, particularly city of Huế and Đà Nẵng, in the Central Region.

Despite the often chaotic manifestation of this interpretative contest, that Republican civil society must be seen as part of an “imagined community.” That community drew its boundaries in opposition to the communist guerrillas and the communist state in the North. They saw themselves as belonging to the “Nation” and thus had the right to make claims on what that “Nation” should be. That “imagined” realm of differentiation, however, only scratches the surface of why those who participated in the interpretative contest constitute a community. Beyond this differentiation, those who participated in the interpretative contest shared a common discourse. That discourse, on the one hand, is constituted by the familiar anticommunist terminologies and narratives drawn from the First Republic and, on the other hand, incorporated the new narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” that arose following the end of the Diệm administration. These narratives existed as a readily available ideological repertoire upon which different groups can mobilize to articulate political claims and demands.

Indeed, different components of the Republican civil society mobilized these narratives at different historical moments during the Military Interregnum to voice demands against—as well as support for—whatever regime was in power. From the First Republic, perhaps most dominant was the narrative of anti-neutralism which was invoked consistently by multiple civil-societal groupings to ensure the State properly handled continuing overtures for the neutralization of South Vietnam—particularly from France’s President Charles De Gaulle. The rejection of the Geneva Accords was invoked more sporadically, forging the deepest impression during the Day of National Resentment—a nationwide commemoration of the 1954 Geneva Accords first initiated in July of 1964—and the conservative reactions to “peace movement” in early 1965 and 1966. The narrative of Vietnamese Underdevelopment, on the other hand, exists primarily as a contextual framework to interpret the deteriorating economic and political conditions of South Vietnam.

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<sup>9</sup> Like much of society, *Tự Do* called for leadership of who “loved the country,” who “had experience in true struggle for the people and the nation,” and an administration that “could satisfy the demands of all political and regional leanings, religions, the classes of the people, etc.,” (“Những ai sẽ cầm các ngọn đuốc chính nghĩa,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 1, 1964).

The narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom,” a novel discourse, was invoked time and time again by virtually every social grouping to demand the actualization of the promised democracy first articulated by the RMC in November of 1963. What that “democracy” looked like, however, differed from group to group as well as moments in historical time. “Democracy,” for the most part, was portrayed as a necessity for the proper prosecution of the anticommunist war. It was depicted as the panacea to resolve the continuing domestic disputes between political blocs which burdened the war effort. As efforts to create viable democratic institutions were met with ongoing political instability and regime changes, emphasis largely moved away from the immediate implementation of general elections and the formation of the National Assembly and towards “stabilization” and “national security.”

That demand for democracy, however, did not cease. Rather, it became a question of priorities—separating those who prioritized a “strong,” stable administration capable of prosecuting the anticommunist war (and democracy to come after) to those who prioritized the immediate actualization of democratic institutions. These emphases held different levels of influence at different points in time. By June of 1965—when Thiệu and Kỳ took power—“democracy” had been largely redefined as the political unity between the administration and civil societal groups around the anticommunist war effort. While the administration would prosecute the war, they must also attend to the social, economic, and matters of political representation demanded on the part of the populace. Effectively addressing those demands was interpreted as the proper enactment of “democracy.”

The narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom”—tightly bounded to the populist overthrow of the “authoritarian” regime of the “Ngô Family”—was mobilized to acquire political legitimacy as well as defending one’s group against accusation of belonging to the “old regime.” Political prestige—particularly in 1964—rested not solely on being “anticommunist” or “anti-neutralist,” political leaders must also be “revolutionary.” During the Military Interregnum, to be “revolutionary” was to be in opposition to “authoritarianism”; and “authoritarianism” was symbolized by the Diệm administration. The Buddhists were largely held up as “revolutionaries” following the November Coup. The leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church—Thích Tâm Châu, Thích Trí Quang, and Thích Thiện Minh—were all at one point persecuted by the former administration. Thích Thiện Mỹ—a monk who died as a result of the Buddhist persecution following the May protests—and Thích Quảng Đức—the infamous monk who was captured on film by the Western media immolating himself in protest of the former regime—were held up as martyrs.<sup>10</sup> The historically prominent nationalist parties—the Đại Việt and the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (VNQDD)—benefitted from being historically suppressed by the Diệm regime. The Hòa Hảo and the Cao Đài—religious sects of the Mekong River Delta—too benefitted similarly.

Groups like the Catholics—who were privileged under Diệm—also had to rely on the “revolutionary” discourse to establish political pedigree. Catholics appealed for political legitimacy by pointing to their historical association to Buddhist leaders and aid given by Catholics to the persecuted during the final months of the former regime. For the Catholics, they deployed evidence of their “contribution” to the “revolution” amidst allegations that the

<sup>10</sup> “Phật Giáo Với Cộng Sản,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 28 (Oct 17, 1964), 2-3; the graves of these Buddhist leaders were visited during the commemoration of the first anniversary of the May protests in Saigon (“80.000 Đồng Bào Thủ Đô: Diễn Hành Mừng Phật Đản,” *Tự Do*, May 27, 1964).

community had “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party” *du đảng Cần Lao* within its ranks.<sup>11</sup> Even newspapers like *Tự Do* relied on this opposition to justify their revolutionary credentials.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the rise of this “revolutionary” discourse, anticommunism continued to be a powerful discourse to attack opponents and build prestige. Accusations of communist sympathies were readily deployed against the Buddhist community—a political tendency that traces back to allegations made by the Diệm administration during the 1963 May protests. Buddhists were often forced to make public proclamations or distribute communiques to defend themselves against allegations that communists had infiltrated their ranks, or their leadership were communist sympathizers. Catholics, on the other hand, were often immune from such allegations because of their consistent demand for stronger anticommunist measures. Moreover, Catholics were led by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh whose anticommunist reputation traced back to the fabled Northern anticommunist communes of Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu prior to 1955. Anti-neutralism, in particular, was deployed by Catholics and nationalist parties following the emergence of the PNSC in October of 1964 and during the rise of the “peace movements”—one of which was led by the Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Liên—in early 1965. Most important, however, were allegations deployed against regimes that were seen as too weak on neutralism or were not adamantly anticommunist enough. This was particularly true for the administrations of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ and Phan Huy Quát.

From early on, diverse social groups had pushed for “cleansing” the administration of the “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party.” This cleansing was most consistently envisioned as removing civil servants, military officers, and politicians that had ties to the “old regime.” In the face of such demands, the various administrations that emerged during the Military Interregnum were often placed on the defensive. Policies, public statements, and promises were made to assuage these demands stemming from newly emerging civil societal groups that had once endured persecution and repression by the hands of the “Ngô Family” and its “henchmen.” As the Military Interregnum grew on, more conservative groups seized the political initiative to demand stronger anticommunist and anti-neutralist policies—pushing back against anti-Cần Lao sentiments. Again, as the discourse shifted, so did governmental policies. Regimes had to respond to these civil societal demands—making stronger anticommunist statements, implementing stricter neutralist policies, and devising new measures to integrate the broader society into the war-effort.

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<sup>11</sup> *Xây Dựng*, a Catholic news organ, once argued that “during the period of Buddhist struggle, the entirety of the Catholics had sympathized with the Buddhists, not only through prayer for those who were persecuted, but Catholic convents and monasteries had secretly opened their backdoors to rescue the nuns and monks” (“Vấn đề rắc rối tôn giáo miền trung phản ứng của bạn đọc sau loạt bài của xây dựng,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan. 6, 1964). Against allegations that the newspapers had “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party” amongst its ranks, the newspaper pointed to how its editor—Fr. Nguyễn Quang Lâm—had wrote pieces prior to the November Revolution that were completely censored by the former regime (“Hộp Thư Hàng Tuần,” *Xây Dựng*, July 6, 1964). The militant priest, Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh, who led the Catholics politically for much of the Military Interregnum is politically justified as a “friend of Thích Tâm Châu ever since [the two] were still in North Vietnam” (“Linh Mục Hoàng Quỳnh, Chủ tịch UBTƯTĐ Công Giáo cho biết,” *Tự Do*, June 30, 1964). One *Xây Dựng* editorial pointed to the credentials of Fr. Hồ Văn Vui—who served imprisonment for opposing the National Assembly under Diệm and supporting the 11-11-1960 attempted coup against Diệm. Justifying the Catholic mobilization in June of 1964, the piece argued that while “the Buddhists had stood up and seized [freedom of belief] from long ago,”—implicitly verifying the legitimacy of the “revolution” against Ngô Đình Diệm—the same had not been accomplished by the Catholics (Lạc Thu Yên, “Biểu tình cho ai?” *Xây Dựng*, July 15-16, 1964).

<sup>12</sup> “Tại sao Tự Do bị đóng cửa, tòa soạn bị bắt giam?” *Tự Do*, Jan. 3, 1964.

The South Vietnamese state, during this period, served largely as a negotiator between conflicting civil societal groups and devised “Program of Action” for each regime was heavily influenced by the demands that arose from non-state political forces. Each regime (and the administrators belonging to each regime) faced the constant threat of criticism and opposition, particularly from newspapers, which were often candid in their condemnations and critiques. Each regime understood its viability was premised on satisfying the diverse civil societal groupings and sought to cater to demands that arose out of that conversation around “True Democracy and Freedom” as well as for more robust anticommunism and war effort. Indeed, for much of the first 20-months of the Interregnum, ideological leadership belonged not to the state but rather the various groups that made up the Republican civil society.

### *State and Society*

There were several reasons why ideological leadership was dominated by the Republican civil society rather than the State during the Interregnum. For one, the discourse of anti-authoritarianism and the adamant demands for democratic institutions placed pressure on the various administrations to attend to the Republican civil society in order to remain legitimate. For another, although military-based organs<sup>13</sup> were deemed the supreme political body of the land, it was not the military who dictated the ideological direction of South Vietnam. For the most part, the military stayed out of domestic politics. Particularly during the civil administrations Trần Văn Hương and Phan Huy Quát, this was expected.

The separation between the civil and military spheres of South Vietnamese society during the Interregnum is essential for comprehending the evolving politics of the era. While much of the literature had covered the internal conflicts between generals, that conflict was one over the control of the South Vietnamese military rather than a control over the South Vietnamese society. In Part III, the emphasis will be upon the conflict within the “civil sphere”—the focal point of discursive development and transformation. The military—important as it was for the anticommunist war—will be only considered when its members move from their military role to a civil one.

The military was a uniquely positioned entity during the Interregnum. For one, it held a monopoly of coercive violence and was able to “intervene” at crucial junctures—often through coups—to ensure that the administration catered to its demands. For another, the discourse that followed the November Revolution attributed success to the military. Indeed, it was the military which orchestrated the coup that toppled the “dictatorship” of Ngô Đình Diệm. Yet, this prestige was not exploited by the military following the November Revolution to dictate the ideological direction of the nation in the manner of indoctrination, near total information control, or perpetual propaganda as seen during the First Republic. Rather, the RMC—from the start—had promised the return of Democracy and the administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ—as well as that of Nguyễn Khánh—implemented policies that lessened the ideological, legal, and political chains that had once bounded journalists, social groups, and non-state actors at large. Dương Văn Minh—the general who led the coup against Diệm—had defined the meaning of the November Revolution as the “transformation of the old to the new...transforming our country from an impoverished nation...into prosperous one, with expanded technology, allowing the people of

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<sup>13</sup> In subsequent order, each of these military organizations were seen as the supreme organ in the Republic: 1) The RMC under Dương Văn Minh (Nov. 1963-Jan. 1964), 2) the RMC under Nguyễn Khánh (Feb. 1964-Oct. 1964), 3) the AFC under Nguyễn Khánh (Dec. 1964-Feb. 1964), 4) the AFC under Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (Mar. 1964-May 1964), and 5) the Directorate under Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (June 1964-Apr. 1967).



Vietnam to escape their poverty, ignorance, abuse, exploitation, bullying, to actualize social justice.” What this required was an “expanded conversation to determine the direction we must follow because political determinations can directly impact the freedom and livelihood of our citizenry.”<sup>14</sup> This set a precedent for both State and Society alike. In the attempt to present that visage of moving towards that “expanded conversation”, the movement from the “old to the new,” the both military and civil administrations during the Interregnum encouraged the political development of civil society.

Several military men did seek administrative or political positions within the various administrations—often highly ranked seats tied to the conduct of the anticommunist war and National Defense. However, as far as discursive involvement went, for the first 20 months of the Interregnum, the military was not a political bloc that vied for legitimacy through discursive contests, debates, and demonstrations—actions that were exclusively enacted by civil societal groups. Rather, the military was tasked with prosecuting the war and fighting the guerrilla insurgents. Their participation in domestic affairs are usually isolated to the few military officers who took on administrative posts within various cabinets or served as provincial heads or governors. For the most part, the military stayed out of the ideological debates and conversations that predominated within civil society. They were held to an esteem of protecting the nation and ensuring security within the context of war. However, for those military officers who assumed administrative positions, their military title did little to prevent criticisms against them and were held to standards as civil officials rather than military ones.<sup>15</sup>

The lack of the PSP—or any equivalent program of ideological work during the first 20 months of the Military Interregnum—is indicative of the State’s lack of ideological control following the collapse of the First Republic. Ideological programs of the First Republic were heavily demonized following the November Revolution and the PSP was singled out as a key representation of the “authoritarianism” that marked the former regime. One early example is poignant. During a general meeting in January 1964 of the “Council of Sages”—a non-elected

<sup>14</sup> “Thủ Tướng Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ Họp Báo Chiều Hôm Qua: Cải Tổ Nội Các Quan Niệm Chính Phủ về Cách Mạng,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 7, 1964.

<sup>15</sup> During the first three months of Military Interregnum, the Dương Văn Minh and his generals attended various ceremonies and public functions, but largely kept out of politics. Rather, domestic affairs were left to Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ who established the political agenda of the new administration. State policies and statements were the responsibility of the civilian Premier and thus it was Thơ who faced the brunt of the domestic onslaught—particularly in his handling of France’s diplomatic recognition of the People’s Republic of China. Under the administration of Nguyễn Khánh, although Khánh controlled the supreme military organ in the land, he was forced to cater to diverse demands from Buddhists, Catholics, and nationalist groups. He was dragged into the political debates over the legitimacy of his administration, whether his administration was enacting promises of democracy, whether the war was being prosecuted effectively, and his administration’s position against neutralism. Indeed, Nguyễn Khánh was the most widely criticized military leader not because of his actions as a General, but rather his policies and conduct as a Premier. Under the civil administrations of Trần Văn Hương and Phan Huy Quát, the role of the military in domestic politics changed once again. As military power shifted to the Young Turks generals who grew to notoriety after saving Nguyễn Khánh during the attempted coup in September of 1964. Although at first promising to remain out of domestic politics, the military intervened 3 times—one in December of 1964 with dissolved the High National Council (HNC), and twice in 1965 which marked the end of the Trần Văn Hương administration at the end of January the end of the Phan Huy Quát administration in early June. The Young Turks—more politically minded than their predecessors—attempted to shore up the legitimacy of these civil administrations but their activities did little to actually influence the political discourse during the period. Indeed, despite the fact that Nguyễn Cao Kỳ and Lt. Col. Phạm Văn Liệu (the newly appointed Chief of National Police) defended the activities of the Thích Quảng Liên—a Buddhist monk who advocated for negotiated ceasefire with North—this did little assuage popular agitation against Thích Quảng Liên’s organization and the period actually saw the rise of anti-neutralist activism.

assembly composed of society's "notables" charged with advising the administration of Dương Văn Minh—the agenda issued that the members "dissect" two speeches from the government, then get together for a general meeting, and finally develop "a number of issues for examination during the discussion." Council members rejected the procedure stating, "We cannot engage in political study through these two speeches as if it was still during the period of the Ngo Dynasty."

This position against political study was reflective in the broader discourse. One editorial described political study under the First Republic as "sessions [which] were usually stretched out with complicated phrases making those who attend bored and tired—yawning here, yawning there—just hoping to exit the meeting room so they could breathe in open air...but once they exit, they know no more than when they entered." The example of political study during the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Assembly election is used. According to the author, despite efforts to educate civilians on democratic procedures, "a large number of votes were cast illegally, and especially within the capitol, a place where people live upon a pile of books."<sup>16</sup>

The issue at hand was not simply the practice of political study but the nature of ideological control and abuse of ideals that marked the Diem administration. According to one contemporary article, the former regime had perpetually proselytized slogans and terminologies that "people are so familiar with to the point of boredom the...refrain[s] of 'Family, Rice and Clothing'... 'what can I do in the common misery.'"<sup>17</sup> Indoctrination within an environment of fear and irresponsibility had cultivated not only authoritarianism in the regime, but an "authoritarian attitude" amongst the population. This "attitude" was evident by the way individuals sought to only protect and benefit themselves and their families. For the intellectuals, this was a silence and a self-preservation whose voices are only publicized in glorification or support of the regime. More than that, the nature of authoritarianism experienced the last 9 years could not have manifest to the degree that it did without the unconscientious participation of its citizens. The regime may have "deified" themselves, but "we—or at least a mentionable proportion amongst us—had sacralized them." Concepts that were deemed valuable and righteous such as "Democracy" or "Freedom" has lost the meaning it once held because of its association to the authoritarianism of the First Republic.<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, it was not mere values of democracy and freedom that were tainted, it was also anticommunism and Republican nationalism itself. An editorial made this explicit:

"In what was once called 'the communist denunciation campaign,' to demonstrate that we have a firm nationalist 'standpoint,' we have wasted countless hundreds tons of paper to decry the atrocities of the communists, we have wasted countless millions of hours studying how to curse Ho Chi Minh and his henchmen, all the while everyday signing and presenting proposals to worship 'President Ngo, the virtuous leader of the nation.'"

These efforts achieved nothing. The only thing that resulted was a chaotic war that "pushed [enemy] troops directly into our domain, attacking us from every direction and killing our rural brethren." Worse, it created "a putrid and broken national machine that was stronger and faster than any well-digging machine in the world and created a tradition of viewing citizens like stock

<sup>16</sup> Phi Thường (Prodigious), "Những cái hay dở của chế độ cũ," *Tự Do*, Feb. 6, 1964

<sup>17</sup> The former "refrain" come from consistent propaganda of returning the traditional importance of "family" to the Vietnamese people—in contrast to the communists—and providing each citizen with "enough rice to eat, clothes to wear"—a central goal of Personalist development. The latter is a twist on the key theme of the "condition of underdevelopment" of the First Republic.

<sup>18</sup> Tiểu Dân, "Cảm nghĩ về sự cáo chung của một chế độ độc tài," *Bách Khoa*, Is. 165 (Nov. 1963), 1-6.

animals.” Cursing the enemy, articulating their “atrocities” were merely strategies to “hide that empty canister” that is the former regime.<sup>19</sup>

Localized attempts to reutilize PSP methods during the period faced strong negative reactions as well. One case in early July of 1964 is noteworthy. In the village of Duy Xuyen, Quảng Nam Province, some 1,300 civilians—many were Buddhists—who were arrested and forced to undergo “compulsory ‘political studies.’” Reports on the case were first censored by the regime, but newspapers like *Tự Do* pushed the story. Once news of the event was made known, it led to near universal condemnation in the South Vietnamese press and these activities of “compulsory ‘political studies’” were effectively shut down by the Ministry of the Interior after a lengthy investigation. Phạm Kim Anh—the Catholic military officer who served as village chief of Duy Xuyen—was subsequently fired. Indeed, the event was amongst those “grievances” that contributed to the monumental Buddhist protests in August of 1964.<sup>20</sup> Another example came in late September when concerned civil servants distributed an open letter articulating opposition to planned resumption of political study sessions in the Central Region. The piece argued that it was “as if we are once again living under the forced and dark days from before, always being brainwashed, tested, praising and condemning wildly not getting anything done.” The letter requested that the administration “avoid...the old tire marks” of the old regime and not resume “9 years of study under the Ngô Dynasty [which] only brought about horrible consequences: making the civil servants question all forms of doctrine, the useless discussions.”<sup>21</sup>

To say the least, the idea of political study was not particularly popular after the First Republic. Indeed, despite popular opposition to political study practices and the like, some administrators during the interregnum years held onto the possibility of re-inaugurating the PSP. Five days following the November Coup, the Office of the Premier led by newly appointed Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ issued a memo cancelling all PSP sessions scheduled for the 7<sup>th</sup> of November “until a later decided date.”<sup>22</sup> However, a December review of the PSP by the same office concluded that although “the practice of study...require no major criticism if implemented correctly and in reality is greatly beneficial because it both generates a spirit of anticommunism for the civil servants as well as a aids them in comprehending and correctly implementing the policies of the government...in reality, the issue of study had been abused by the former regime, especially during the recent Buddhist Crisis to reinforce the position of a group of people.” According to the report, “popular opinion likens [the Program] to a form of brainwashing and is currently being in accordance to the spirit of the November Revolution.” Nevertheless, the review proposed the reimplementation of the program “through only popularizing the direction and ideals of the Revolutionary Military Council and the Provisional Government.” The review argued that “obviously...[the reconfigured program] will absolutely excise all forms of brainwashing, one-sided study materials, and especially fallacious policies of the old regime.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Dân Tôi, “Làm Cách Nào để Tránh Vết xe cũ,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 21-27, 1964.

<sup>20</sup> During these chaotic riots led by students and Buddhists, Phạm Kim Anh was held hostage for several days by avenging protestors. “Student Mob Protests,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 9, 1964; “S. Vietnam Troops Fail to Free Army Officer,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 3, 1964.

<sup>21</sup> “Tác phong ‘nhà Ngô’ sắp tái sinh: Hội họp, học taoppj, hoan hô, đã đảo!” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 28, 1964; “Nguyện vọng của một số công chức Huế,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 2, 1964.

<sup>22</sup> CV 151-CD/PTT dated 11-6-1963, *Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trang giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29293.

<sup>23</sup> “học tập trong giới công chức,” attached to CV 755-B-ĐUHC/NC5 dated 12-14-1963, *Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trang giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29293.

Despite calling for the reconfiguration of the program, there is little evidence to suggest that the PSP was actually revived during the 3-months administration of Dương Văn Minh.

In May of 1964, another attempt was made. The Ministry of Information—then headed by Phạm Thái—appealed to Nguyễn Khánh to reenact the PSP. According to Phạm Thái, “the practice of political study, compared to other psychological warfare practices, have a deeper function and is longer lasting.” The PSP, as argued, can contribute to “developing standpoint and increase the aptitude of the people.” The idea that “because [South Vietnam] is already democratic there was no need for political study” is erroneous and is not applicable to the present conditions of the nation. The issue should not be the erasure of political study practices, but rather “how to create an atmosphere of democratic discussion that is enthusiastic and constructive.” Furthermore, acknowledging the association that the term *học tập* “study” has with the former regime, the Minister of Information suggested that the term *thảo luận* “discussion” be used instead.<sup>24</sup>

Unlike the proposal of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ in December of 1963, the suggestions by Phạm Thái did not completely fall on deaf ears. In July of 1964, the practice of political study was utilized as a component of what would become an annual ideological effort on the part of the Republic of Vietnam: the commemoration of “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận* on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July.<sup>25</sup> This effort was in no way a complete revival of the program and was severely limited in scope. Indeed, as the historical data shows, study sessions were rarely held, and a holistic reimplementing of the program did not occur until June of 1965. The Bus Administration, for example, held discussion sessions in August centered on a memo by the Minister of the Interior regarding forced taxation of civil servants by communist infiltrators.<sup>26</sup> Study documents were developed for the National Day celebration for November 1<sup>st</sup> of 1964, but no documents exist to demonstrate that these materials were actually studied. Relatively limited events were planned for the first anniversary of the November Revolution was most likely due to the fact that this was the transitional period from the administration of Nguyễn Khánh to Trần Văn Hương and commemoration activities were overshadowed by an attack on Biên Hòa airbase.<sup>27</sup> And in April of 1965, the Ministry of Agriculture conducted study sessions on “The Fake Peace of the Vietnamese Communists” amidst the controversy over peace movements

<sup>24</sup> “tổ chức lại việc học tập trong cơ quan và ngoài nhân dân,” in CV 2643-BTT/TĐTL dated 5-8-1964, *Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trang giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29293.

<sup>25</sup> See records of political study planning, associated activities, and session reports for the 1964 “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận* in *Tài liệu học tập của Sở Túc Mễ Nhân ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, NCN, Fold. 855; *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế v/v học tập đề tài "Ngày Quốc Hận", "Cách mạng 01/11/1963" năm 1964*, TQT, Fold. 3585; *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, BCCGT, Fold. 1773.

<sup>26</sup> *Tài liệu học tập của Nha Công Quản chuyên chở Sài Gòn về vấn đề việt cộng thu thuế công chức năm 1964*, BCCGT, Fold. 1772.

<sup>27</sup> “Tài Liệu Hội Thảo: Cách Mạng 1-11-1963,” attached to CV 8124-BTT/TĐTL/PG dated 10-14-1964, *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế v/v học tập đề tài "Ngày Quốc Hận", "Cách mạng 01/11/1963" năm 1964*, TQT, Fold. 3585. Some celebrations were reported, however. Though they were markedly more contained than what was seen for the “Day of National Resentment” commemoration in July. Most notably was a military parade and a dinner party held at Gia Long Palace in Saigon (“Half US jet bombers in Vietnam disabled: Guerrillas use mortars to attack airfield,” *The Guardian*, Nov 2, 1964; “Kỷ niệm đệ nhất chu niên cách mạng 1-11, Diễn binh tại bến Bạch Đằng,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 3, 1964; “Quốc Trưởng Phan Khắc Sửu chủ tọa cuộc diễn binh trang trọng và đơn giản,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 3, 1964; distributed news reports and editorials from Vietnamese Press Agency *Việt Tân Xã*, see *Tập bản tin VTX về lễ Quốc khánh ngày 01.11.1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 3134).

plaguing the Quát administration.<sup>28</sup> Evidence does not suggest, however, that these studies went beyond that of the Agricultural Ministry.

Once the PSP was finally re-inaugurated in June of 1965 under the administration of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, it set the stage for the development of a nation-wide project—the embryo of which was first publicly advertised by the press in August. Renamed as “‘political discussion’ (because the term ‘study’ or ‘propaganda’ can generate negative reactions to the initiative, distorted by the old regime and the Vietnamese communists),” sessions were to be conducted in “places with security, in the cities, governmental organs, information centers.”<sup>29</sup> The broader propaganda and indoctrination program—eventually called “General Information” (Thông Tin Đại Chúng)—was not established until 1970, but the groundworks for such an expansive program was set during the early days of the Kỳ administration.<sup>30</sup>

The lack of a coherent ideological work program—partially a consequence of the constant regime changes and political turmoil of the period—was not lost on the wider society. As early as June, editorials in *Tự Do* had been pushing for greater attentiveness to the “political” dimensions of the anticommunist war. On the one hand, these editorials called upon the state to establish democratic institutions, respond to citizen’s demands, and resolve domestic issues. On the other hand, they argued that stronger psychological warfare programs—viewed as largely absent or neglected by the administration—were necessary measures to make the envisioned “democracy” possible. One editorial in July, for example, argued that psychological warfare must be “placed at the forefront of our program of operations.” This meant not just propaganda but rather a holistic effort to cultivate a “spirit in which we dare to believe that we could overcome any obstacle” and creating a socio-political environment in which political parties, civil organizations, youths and students would be willing to contribute to the war effort without the coercion of state. What was needed as ideology, or a “direction,” “ideals,” a “belief” that all components of society can strive towards. According to the author, having anticommunist “righteousness” cannot be reducible to slogans or “pretty words,” but “firm and exact argumentation” that can explain “why do you oppose communism?” This “argumentation” needed to be taught and propagated so that society can have the ideological means to combat

<sup>28</sup> “Cuộc Vận Động Hòa Bình Giả Tạo của Việt Cộng,” in CV 4076/CNNV/C dated 4-20-1965, *tài liệu học tập chính trị của Nha Cảnh Nông năm 1965*, NCN, Fold. 873

<sup>29</sup> Under the penname Phan Mật (Phan is a common surname, while *mật* means “secretive”), the editorial “Vài Đề Nghị Thông Tin Tuyên Truyền cho Công Tác Phát Thanh và Công tác tổ chức thảo luận chính trị” (A few Information and Propaganda Proposals for for Broadcasting and Organizing Political Discussions) published in *Chính Luận* on August 18<sup>th</sup> was most likely a planted article by the Ministry of Psychological Warfare or an essay written by someone close to the administration. Not only did the piece promoted “political discussion”—which was the official name designated by decree of the Ministry of Psychological Warfare for a new political indoctrination program in late July—the proposed structure of the program (2-tiered system which emphasized political theory for the 1<sup>st</sup> rank, and general discussion meant for the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank) and its proposed procedures (students should be able to “freely express confusion...suspicion”) matched precisely that of the revamped PSP as described in government documentation. The fact that this piece “proposed” rather than dictated PSP procedures signified that a) the program had not been expanded beyond that of the administration and b) there was probably no program of similar stature in existence at the point of publication. From July to October, the “Political Discussion Program” under Kỳ was in its trial phase.

<sup>30</sup> Decree 1147-a/NĐ/ThT/VP on Oct. 28, 1969 eliminated Psychological Warfare and Political Study directive bodies to form the Committee for Political Mobilization (Ủy Ban Động Viên Chính Trị) which built on previous PSP concepts to form a propaganda project that would target not only civil servants and soldiers, but social and political organizations as well as all public gatherings. Retraining of “information cadres” *cán bộ thông tin* would also be revamped to form cohorts of presenters and discussion leaders for the expanded program (“Chương Trình Thông Tin Đại Chung,” dated May 23, 1970 in *Hồ Sơ Tổ Chức các Khóa Học Tập, Hội Thảo về Thông Tin Đại Chung năm 1970*, PTTVNCH: 30445).

communist propaganda. The society must be appraised of those “threats” against the nation: communism, neutralism, underdevelopment, authoritarianism, etc. From that a “spirit” can be cultivated and push people willingly into action.<sup>31</sup> As 1965 rolled around, the demands for greater political and psychological warfare efforts were increasingly pushed by conservative groups which came to the fore in adamant opposition to the emerging “peace movements.” Indeed, while “indoctrination” and “brainwashing” were generally objected to, psychological warfare programs to generate unity and greater anticommunist adamancy were seen as necessary in Republican Vietnam.

This seeming contradiction between a rejection of “brainwashing” but a call for “psychological warfare” arose as the Republic negotiated the conflicting demands of the anticommunist war and the promise of “Freedom and Democracy.” Indeed, when the Kỳ administration finally reimplemented the PSP, the program agenda emphasized that the “spirit of each discussion: must be truly open, free, democratic; avoiding brainwashing, insensitivity.”<sup>32</sup> Apart from this new “vision” for the PSP, the administration further emphasized the need to move from revolutionary “destruction, razing of everything” to that of “construction and reform.”<sup>33</sup> The purpose of the PSP was to “help cadres and citizens to better discover the national direction and policies as well as the responsibilities of cadres and the citizenry.”<sup>34</sup> The reinaugurated Program was meant to build unity and stability in an era marked by protests, demonstrations, and upheavals in the name of “Democracy and Freedom.” The revival of the PSP came about only after 20-months of such political turmoil. The values engendered in the social upheavals, however, could not be discarded. They, instead, had to be blended into the growing necessity of a wider and thorough anticommunist war effort. The resulting PSP—and the wider attempt by the Kỳ administration to retrieve ideological control—emerged out of this fragile negotiation between the need for stronger anticommunist programs and experienced liberalization of politics of the last 20 months.

### *Theorizing the Interregnum*

Republican anticommunism, as a form of “state-led nationalism,” may have derived from the First Republican state and had come about through a process of sovereign state formation.<sup>35</sup> However, what is defined as nationalism at one point in time need not be the same as how that nationalism is defined later. As Itzigsohn and vom Hau point out, “nationalism as a state ideology changes as a result of political and social conflict.” Nationalism, in this view, is an “unfinished” production, continually changing and in “constant tension between alternative narrative, state ideologies, and cultural scripts.” Nationalism, as such, is constantly being created and recreated. Their model, introduced at the beginning of this dissertation, points to the process of ideological transformation which entailed the routinization and normalization of nationalist

<sup>31</sup> “Chiến Thắng: 1 vấn đề cố gắng và kiên nhẫn trường kỳ trong sự linh động,” *Tự Do*, July 28-Aug.2, 1964.

<sup>32</sup> “gây phong trào hội thảo trong các cơ quan,” in CV 3493/BTLC/VP dated 6-25-1965, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29589.

<sup>33</sup> “Tình hình và nhiệm vụ trong giai đoạn mới,” attached to CV 9.407-QT/HDHT dated 12-14-1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT, Fold. 3726.

<sup>34</sup> CV 3540/BTLC/VP dated 6-28-1965 in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29589.

<sup>35</sup> On state-led nationalism, see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States* (Blackwell, 1990); Charles Tilly, “Citizenship, Identity and Social History,” *International Review of Social History*, 40:S3 (1995); 1-17; Charles Tilly, “States and nationalism in Europe 1492-1992,” *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), 131-146.

narrative as “cultural scripts,” the ability of “excluded” actors to mobilize these prevalent scripts against the state, and the ability of these populist movements to change the official discourse.<sup>36</sup>

While the entirety of their model does not completely fit upon the historical occurrences in South Vietnam,<sup>37</sup> certain lessons can be extracted from their model to theoretically frame the significance of the era. First, Itzigsohn’s and vom Hau’s model acknowledges continuities within a context of change. Indeed, novelty is never a total and complete break with the past. Human actors necessarily must rely on what was already known in order to chart new modes of actions. That “historical aspect” of human agency is entwined with the way people “imagine alternative possibilities” and deal with the “contingencies of the present.”<sup>38</sup> What this means is that lessons and knowledge taught and learned in the past are drawn upon even as human actors face new structural conditions, challenges, and opportunities. At moments of significant change, human actors do not simply develop new modes of actions or new beliefs and ideas, they build and refurbish existing ones, though with much expansion in the way of innovations.

Second, the model points to the importance of non-state mobilization and the discursive influence of such mobilization. Interpretations advocated for by power social movements can penetrate official discourse, redefining nationalism and shifting state priorities. Third, state discourses can be reutilized in ways that challenge the legitimacy of regimes that proselytize them. Their model provides an avenue to understand how Republican anticommunist ideas can be deployed against the state that originally gave birth to it. During “critical junctures”—or historical moments during which existing structural confines are relaxed, deteriorate, or destroyed (such as during revolution, coups, or state collapse)—human innovation and agency becomes consequential for determining the trajectory a society would take.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, as Jansen

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<sup>36</sup> Jose Itzigsohn and Matthias vom Hau, “Unfinished imagined communities: States, social movements, and nationalism in Latin America,” *Theory & Society*, 35:2006, 193-212.

<sup>37</sup> For the authors, the type of transformation that a country experience is determined by the scope of social mobilization within a society, the political control of state elites, the extent to which state ideology penetrates the larger society, and the level of polarization between ethnoracial groups. While the authors provide a schematic to predict the types of possible outcomes from a host of determinates, the model does not fit neatly on to the occurrences in South Vietnam. First, the integration of the democratic promise, civil liberties, and social justice into the Republican state’s official discourse was less a measure of power between different groups as it was a series of contingent moments that allowed new ideas to penetrate the official narrative although those who most strongly championed those ideas never seized state power. Second, the “alternative” narrative proposed during the Military Interregnum combat less the state narrative established during the First Republic than it sought to ensure the actualization of those ideals through democratic reform and institutions. Third, with the collapse of the First Republic, it was not simply subaltern movements like the Buddhists which pushed for “True Democracy and Freedom,” the various regimes that came to power also mobilized this narrative in attempt to legitimize their own power. And fourth, the new narrative coexisted with the old as both were utilized by a variety of social groupings to legitimize their own political standings. The crux of politics during the Military Interregnum was not a supplanting of a new narrative upon the old, but rather manner in which the two should be conjoined; it was a matter of priorities—separating those who prioritized a “strong,” stable administration capable of prosecuting the anticommunist war (and democracy to come after) to those who prioritized the immediate actualization of democratic institutions. The various social groupings that emerged or reemerged during the period—Buddhists, Catholics, journalists, students, historically prominent nationalist organizations (like the Đại Việt or the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng) and religious sects—agreed on the importance of democratic actualization to protect and politically reinforce an anticommunist South Vietnam. The contest was who should lead such change and how that change should manifest.

<sup>38</sup> Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, “What is Agency?” *American Journal of Sociology* 103:4(1998), 962-1023.

<sup>39</sup> On “critical junctures”: Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures, the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America*, (University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); James Mahoney, “Path Dependence in historical sociology,” *Theory and Society*, 29:4(2000), 507-548; Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton University Press, 2004).

argue, while “populist mobilization,” as in the case of Latin America, may be consequential in determining the transformation of the official national discourse, it was not an “intrinsic” aspect of political culture and are only crucial during critical moments when actors are faced with “novel challenges and possibilities.” It was during such moments that new narratives, scripts, cultural repertoires and forms of politics emerged to “transcend the stability of routine expectations and practices.”<sup>40</sup>

Such is the case of the South Vietnamese Interregnum. The rapid, calamitous, and populist overthrow of the Ngô Đình Diệm administration opened a political space entailing new challenges and possibilities. The Revolutionary Military Council seized the mantle of national leadership through an orchestrated coup, toppling nearly a decade of rule in a matter of days, and the new administration under Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ promised freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of religion, freedom of association, social justice, democratic reforms, and a host of civil liberties—liberties that were allegedly denied under the “nepotistic dictatorship” of Ngô Đình Diệm. Former leaders of the Diệmist political enterprise were persecuted, infrastructures of surveillance and propaganda were disbanded, and civil society began theorizing, predicting, and advocating for a vision of what would come after. The horizon, as actors of the period perceived it, was with boundless possibilities. The “November Revolution” of 1963 separated the “old regime” from the “new regime.” It “open[ed] the general struggle for the people to complete a new historical mission”,<sup>41</sup> a mission of “transforming our country from an impoverished nation...into prosperous one,”<sup>42</sup> and it began a revolution to “‘purify from the inside,’ bring all their soul and energy to the service of righteousness.”<sup>43</sup> It was a period of promise and hope that South Vietnam would move forward towards actualizing democracy and making the Republic a polity for all.

But this democratic promise coexisted with ingrained conceptualizations once taught under the First Republic. Indeed, the rejection of Ngô Đình Diệm in the post-1963 era did not necessarily entail the rejection of the Republican anticommunist principles that his regime had once stood for. Indeed, anticommunist values of anti-neutralism, practices of communist denunciation, and depictions of the Geneva Accords remained. These narratives coexisted with ideals of “True Democracy and Freedom,” and were modularly utilized by a host of political and religious groups to combat the state, wage demands, attack political opponents, and legitimize their own standing in a contest to determine the future of the Republic of Vietnam. Democracy and Freedom, during the period, was not simply a cause unto itself; rather, these ideals were located within a broader interpretation of the anticommunist war. Indeed, for those who pushed the cause of “True Democracy and Freedom,” democratic institutions, civil liberties, and social justice were *necessary* for victory over communism.

Indeed, the Military Interregnum provides the empirical basis for understanding the survivability of ideas beyond the temporal and formal confines of the state. Moreover, it demonstrates how moments of abrupt change and “revolution” does not entail a complete removal from the past. Rather, it highlights the reproduction of ideas and practices—matters that

<sup>40</sup> Robert S. Jansen, “Situated political innovation: explaining the historical emergence of new modes of political practice,” *Theory and Society*, 45(2016), 319-360.

<sup>41</sup> “Hoài Niệm của Thượng Tòa Trí Quang,” and Nguyễn Tâm, “Đài Phát Thanh Huế và Ngày Giỗ Đầu của các em,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 6 (Apr. 25, 1964), 2-3).

<sup>42</sup> “Thủ Tướng Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ Hợp Báo Chiều Hôm Qua: Cải Tổ Nội Các Quan Niệm Chính Phủ về Cách Mạng,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 7, 1964.

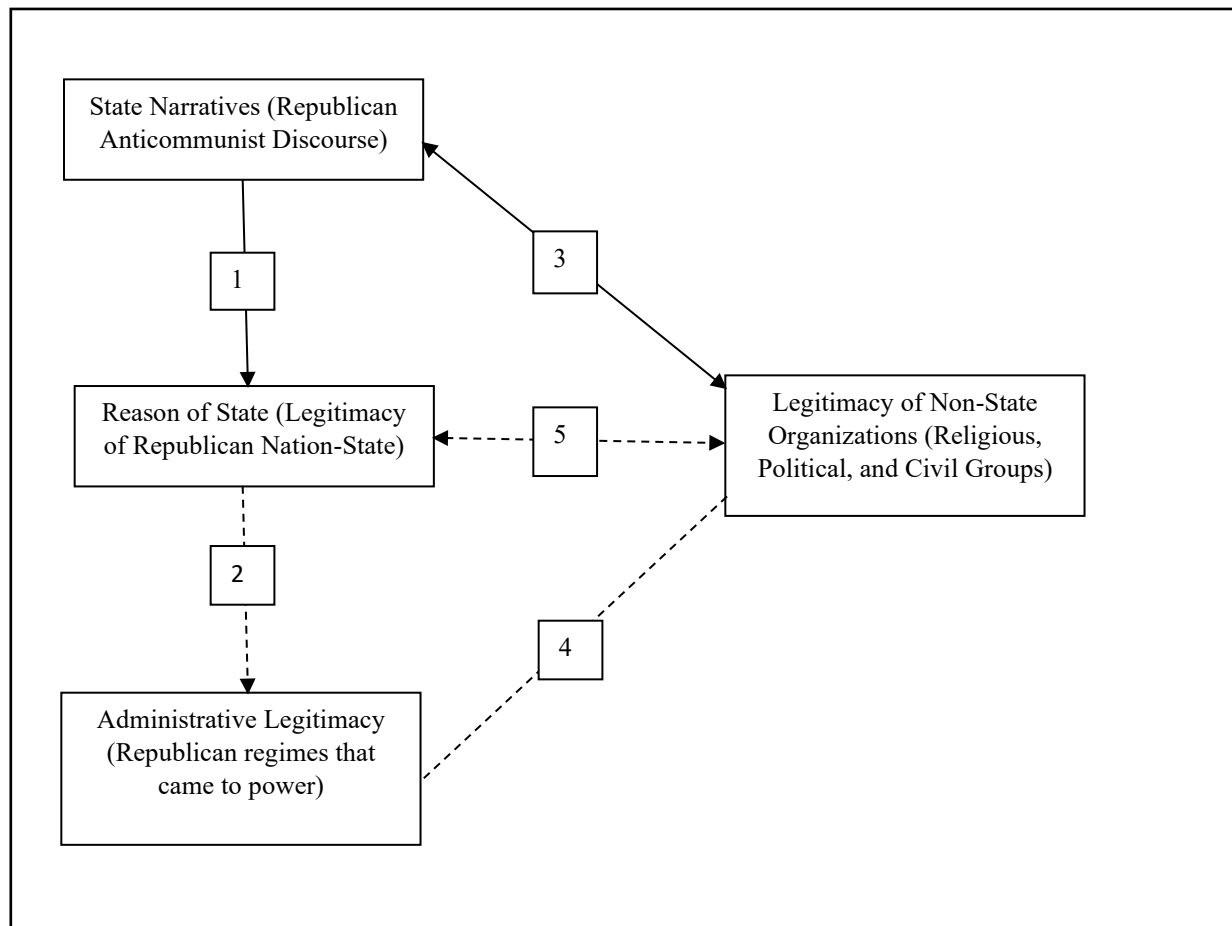
<sup>43</sup> This piece was originally printed in *Ngôn Luận* on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November and was reprinted in *Bách Khoa*, Is. 1965 (Nov. 1963), p. 93.



are often attended to during periods of institutional stability—during a period of monumental change. That reproduction was not due to some aggregation of minor modifications over an extended period, but rather a reproduction in which opportunities were expanded and thus gave enormous leeway for innovations.

To contextualize the politics of the Interregnum, I present below a theoretical model that picturizes the relationship between Republican anticommunism, the Republican state, and the Republican civil society. The solid line represents direct and often uncontentious relationships, while the dashed lines represents more contingent and contentious relationships. Direction of arrows signify the direction of influence.

Graph 3: Theoretical Model of Republican Anticommunism in State-Society Relationship.

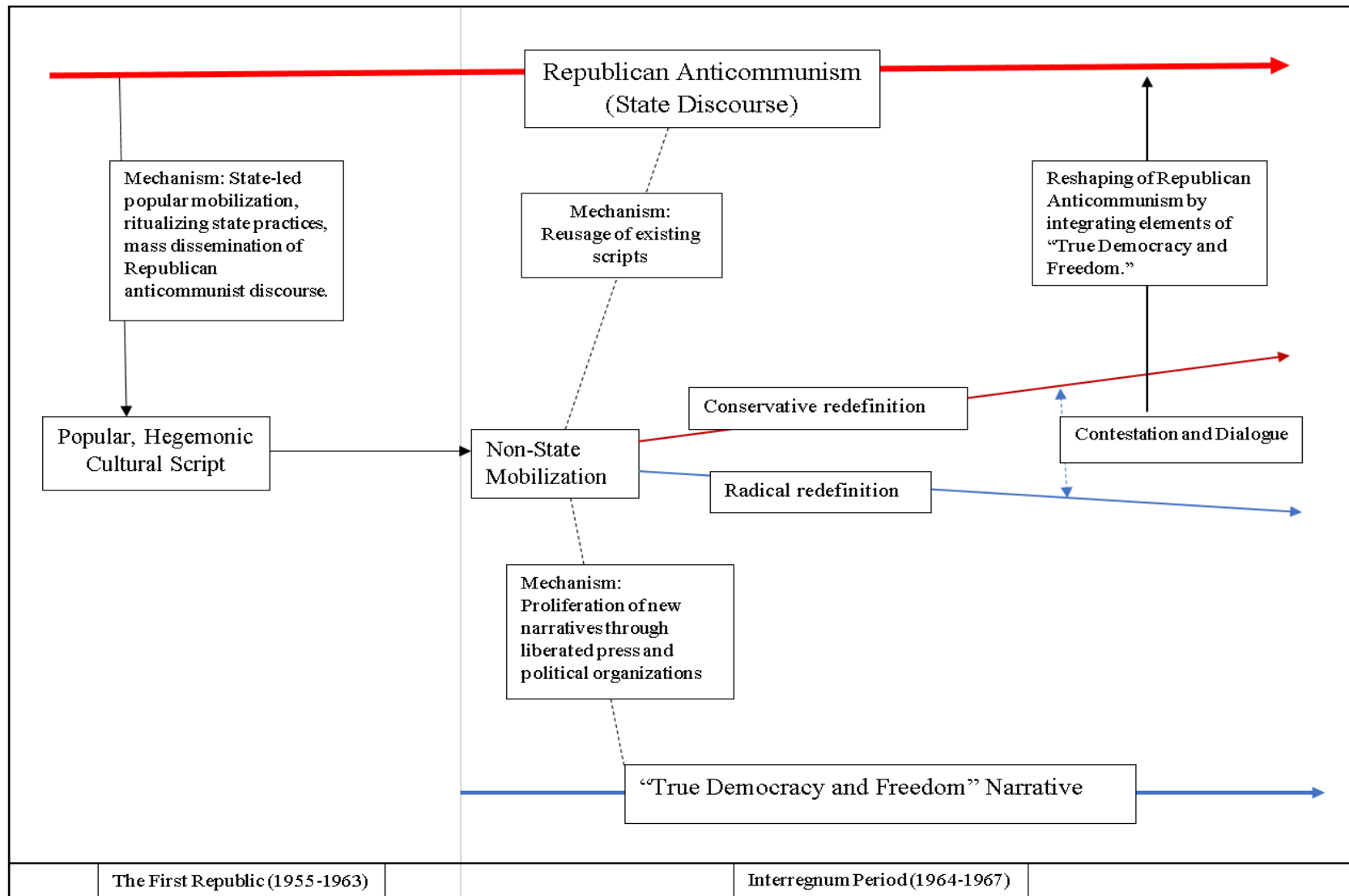


Republican anticommunist discourse provides legitimacy (1) for the existence of the Vietnamese Republic as a nation-state proper. That legitimacy is appropriated by various administrations (2) by presenting itself as champions of Republican anticommunism and thus representative of the nation. However, because anticommunism has transformed into a cultural script during the First Republican nation-building, various civil societal organizations were able to appeal to the anticommunist nationalist discourse (3) as well as lay claim to the Republican state (5) during the Interregnum. In doing so, these groups shaped not only the content of the Republican anticommunist discourse, but also the reason of state itself. Through the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom,” tensions existed between the various regimes that came to

power and the various civil societal groups (4) that emerged during the period. While pushing for an alternative conception of national belonging focused on expanded civil liberties, these groups still adhered to established Republican anticommunist narratives and norms. The rise of the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” thus problematizes the legitimacy that regimes had in their claim to the state (2), and subsequently over anticommunism (1). This enhances the claim of oppositional groups in civil society over the state (5) and the anticommunist nationalist discourse (3).

During the Military Interregnum, the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” lent itself to civil societal mobilization and had potential to place the legitimacy of any administration that came to power into doubt. Below is a graphical historical summary of the theoretical process through which civil societal mobilization shaped the Republican anticommunist discourse during the Interregnum.

Graph 4: Theoretical Summary of Societal Mobilization during Republican Interregnum.



As the graph above demonstrates, non-state mobilization drew inspiration from the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” while also utilizing “old” anticommunist narratives to legitimize their political activities. During the First Republic, Republican anticommunism became a “consolidated” cultural script, familiar and prevalent throughout South Vietnamese society. With the collapse of the First Republic in 1963, a liberated press and revival of non-state political organizations (like the Đại Việt, the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, and the dissident religious sects Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài) pushed diverse interpretations of “True Democracy and Freedom.” While advancing claims to greater civil liberties and instituting of democratic norms, these groups, nevertheless, relied on established Republican anticommunist narratives once propagated by the First Republic. As the Military Interregnum progressed, this diverse utilization became bifurcated between a “conservative” faction which emphasized gradual democratic reforms and prioritized the anticommunist war effort and a “radical” faction pushing for immediate democratic transition and prioritized the development of South Vietnam’s political, economic, and social institutions. The former became increasingly associated with the military which returned to power in June of 1965 under the premiership of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ. The latter, in large part, continued to exist as the “oppositional” voice for the remainder of the Republican era.

The contentious relationship between these two factions in Republican politics greatly shaped how regimes represented themselves and the anticommunist cause. This was most evident during the Kỳ’s administration which sought to legitimize itself through not only “old” narratives of Republican anticommunism, but also appropriated aspects of the democratic narrative articulated by the Republican society. The Directorate conjoined these two narratives into a discursive articulation which presented the military—rather than any civil societal group—as the champion of democratic reforms as well as the legitimate inheritors of the anticommunist cause. Under the Kỳ administration, conservative groups became increasingly coopted under into state’s activities, particularly Catholics and the moderate Buddhist faction led by Thích Tâm Châu. This cooptation, however, was incomplete. Those that were coopted still held a level of political autonomy and the radical faction still retained considerable influence. This incompleteness of ideological and political monopolization would manifest itself during the 1967 elections in which prominent politicians took a direct stance to the war-focused policies of the regime. The victory of the military ticket during the Presidential Election and the domination of Catholics in the National Assembly elections greatly consolidated the conservative interpretations of the narrative. However, the “opposition” subsisted, though with diminished influence. The incompleteness of the Republican state’s ideological and political control would manifest again during the last year of the Republic in which Thiệu faced widespread societal opposition which called for his resignation and the end to the war.

The survivability of Republican anticommunism was, in large part, based on its continued relevance in South Vietnamese politics. During the Interregnum—a period of great political instability—narratives like that on the Geneva Accords and Anti-neutralism survived and, indeed, flourished, primarily due to their relevance and utility in civil societal mobilization. Although not contesting the necessity of an anticommunist South Vietnam, these mobilizations targeted different administrations on the premise that these regimes failed to either deliver on promises of democratic reforms or were “weak” in the face of the communist threat. As will be demonstrated in the empirical chapters of Part III, the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom,” while presented as an alternative nationalist script, facilitated the spread and continued consolidation of Republican anticommunism. The symbiotic relationship between

these two discourses allowed the ideal of “True Democracy and Freedom” to flourish, while Republican anticommunist narratives were readily perpetuated alongside it.

### *The Data Selected*

To capture the interwoven dynamics between discourse and politics during the Military Interregnum, the following chapters are built primarily from contemporary South Vietnamese newspapers. Two general newspapers are selected from the array of periodicals that emerged during the period: *Chính Luận* and *Tự Do*. These newspapers are selected because a) they continued publishing throughout the remainder of the Republican Era, b) their ability to subsist allowed them to become some of the most recognized and authoritative newspapers in South Vietnam, and c) they—more often than not—provide discussion and insights from a multitude of political spectrums and cannot be reducible to representing any particular political interest group of the period. Based in Saigon, both of these newspapers were daily, non-partisan periodicals which, for the most part, disseminated ideals of anticommunism and Republican nationalism, reported on major events, held (often in full-text) statements, laws, and policies from the state, published editorials and commentaries from a host of contributors, and were integral to the civil politics of the era.

Founded in April of 1964, *Chính Luận* by 1967 had the highest circulation of any daily newspapers at some 40,000 and was published by Đặng Văn Sung—a man who had historical ties to the Đại Việt Party. The newsroom secretary Từ Chung was a fiery journalist who regularly critiqued anything from American policy and popular opinions to the political activities of South Vietnamese religious groups and the Republican state. In late December of 1965, Từ Chung was assassinated by guerrilla forces outside of the *Chính Luận* publishing station. The newspaper was exceptional for daily review of reports and opinion published in other periodicals, serving somewhat as a “fact-checker” in civil debates and discussions. These reports were published in its regular column “Đọc Báo” (Reading the News) or “Cuốn Sổ Tay” (Handbook)—the latter of which was penned by Thăng Hề (The Clown) which took a satirical approach to all things serious in South Vietnamese politics. Formerly a 4-page periodical, the newspaper expanded to 8 pages in May of 1965 after the establishment of the new press regulations under then-Psychological Warfare Minister Maj. Gen. Linh Quang Viên. Its inner pages were dedicated to editorials and commentaries which provided an abundance of data on South Vietnamese popular opinion.

*Tự Do* had a circulation of 20,000 in 1967 and was active during the First Republic. The newspaper was forcibly closed down in early September of 1963 and its writers and editors were imprisoned for reporting on the protest activities of Buddhists and youths during the Crisis.<sup>62</sup> After the First Republic, its revival came in January of 1964 and was headed by Nguyễn Duy Cần—a renowned cultural writer who went by the penname of Thu Giang (Autumn Land). Although never expanding beyond its 4-page format, the periodical is exceptional for its regular editorial column “Lập Trường” (Standpoint) written by its editorial board which contained analysis, commentary, and appraisal of contemporary developments both domestic and abroad. Its international news column “Nhận Xét Thời Cuộc” (Appraisal of the Time) regularly deployed analysis of international communist activities, critiqued neutralist overtures, and discussed political and military developments on the international stage. Like many newspapers of its time, its inner pages are dedicated to short stories and editorials which corroborate this dissertation’s appraisal of public opinion and political discourse drawn from *Chính Luận*.

<sup>62</sup> “Tại Sao Tự Do bị đóng cửa,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 3, 1964.

Beyond these two staple periodicals, the following chapters will also draw upon more factional periodicals to determine the scope of political discourse during the Interregnum years. The newspaper *Xây Dựng* is heavily drawn upon to determine the opinions and debates specific to Catholics during the period. With a circulation of 15,000 in 1967, the newspaper is headed by Fr. Nguyễn Quang Lãm and was closely associated with the militant Catholic movement led by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh. Like *Tự Do*, the Catholic newspaper also had a regular editorial column “Ý Kiến Chúng Tôi” (Our Opinions) written by its editors and provide synopsis and analysis of developing events. Its inner pages are dedicated to editorials, short stories, and theological treatise related to the Catholic experience in South Vietnam. These pages are exceptional in providing a Catholic insight on the perpetual conflicts with Vietnamese Buddhists and the evolving discourse on the “vestiges of the Cần Lao” during the first 20-months of the Interregnum.

Discourses specific to the Buddhists are harder to track down. The Unified Buddhist Church’s main periodical *Hải Triều Âm* was not available for dissertation. This periodical emerged in early 1964 but was closed down in September of 1964 for publishing an article calling for negotiated settlement with the communist guerrillas. Rather, to scope the discursive dimensions specific to the Buddhists, the following chapters rely on the weekly journal *Lập Trường*—first published in March of 1964—which epitomizes the militant, Buddhist-influenced movement dominating politics in the Central Region and Saigon during the period. Published in Huế, the weekly contains well-crafted anticommunist, anti-neutralist, and anti-authoritarian treatises which scopes the rationale, opinions, and beliefs of this radical branch in the Republican civil society. Its regular analysis of contemporary events is held on its final pages in the column “Nhật Ký Lập Trường” (Diary of Lập Trường) which not only describes developing events but provide blunt commentaries on its relevance to South Vietnam and the Buddhist community. The weekly was closed down in November of 1964 after publishing an editorial which was construed as advocating the ejection of “emigres” (read as “Northern emigres”) from South Vietnam by one of its regular contributors.<sup>63</sup> The end of the weekly also coincided with the collapse of the anti-Cần Lao, People’s National Salvation Council in the Central Region which took the South Vietnamese media by storm in October—a movement for which the weekly served as the official mouthpiece. For 1965 until the formation of the Second Republic, this dissertation relies on the daily *Chánh Đạo* which was first published in March of 1965. Headed by the former Deputy Director of the Buddhist Chaplain Corp, Thích Hộ Giác (birth name: Ngô Bửu Đạt), the newspaper provides political insight from the Buddhists on the emerging “peace movements,” the political dimensions of the Buddhist community during the Military Interregnum, and—most importantly—the conflicts within the leadership of the Unified Buddhist Church. Its regular editorial column “Thấy và Nghĩ” (See and Think) is written by its editors and provides analysis and commentary on developing events. Like other newspapers of its time, the inner pages of this 4-page daily provide cultural, political, and social insights through editorials, short stories, and commentaries.

These newspapers are the crux upon which the following chapters are built. However, due to the deprivation of a holistic scholarship on the Military Interregnum in the present literature, to construct a robust analysis of the period, this dissertation relies on Vietnamese-language works that were produced outside of the English-speaking academia. These works

<sup>63</sup> Cao Huy Thuần, “Tạm Biệt Bạn Đọc,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 30 (Nov. 12, 1964), 13; see Catholic northern emigres reaction: “Bác sĩ Chủ tịch Lê Khắc Quyển hãy giải thích Lực Lượng của Ông mưu đồ gì mà đòi đuổi một triệu dân bắc di cư,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 19, 1964.

provide a chronology of events and stylize the components of South Vietnamese politics. Although written and published by individuals outside of the English-speaking academic world, these works are invaluable for the proper appraisal of the period. The most important of these works is the collection written by Đoàn Thêm—a regular contributor to the journal *Bách Khoa* who had once served as the Office General of Ngô Đình Diệm’s office from 1955-1963.<sup>64</sup> His collection largely comprises daily notes taken from 1945 onward based largely on reports from newspapers and government communiques. Broken into a series of books, the first spanned from 1945-1964. Entitled *Hai Mươi Năm Qua: Việc Từng Ngày* (The Past 20 Years: Daily Matters), the book originally came out in 1966 and was advertised in *Bách Khoa* that summer alongside his debut of “*Những Ngày Chưa Quên*” (The Days Not Yet Forgotten) which eventually was published into a book in 1969.<sup>65</sup> Reproduction of *Hai Mươi Năm Qua* in Vietnamese America came in the 1980s. Only the last section of *Hai Mươi Năm Qua* is utilized by this dissertation to scope the chronology of events in 1964. For years 1965-1967, this chapter relies on subsequent works by Đoàn Thêm published under the title *Việc Từng Ngày* (Daily Matters)—one for each of these years—which were all released in 1968.<sup>66</sup>

To corroborate the historical arguments made in this dissertation, Lâm Vĩnh Thế’s *Republic of Vietnam 1963-1967: Years of Political Chaos* will also be utilized. Built primarily on CIA-declassified documents and contemporary newspaper reports, the book, however, is non-academic and published by the Vietnamese-Canadian publishing house Hoài Việt in 2010. The author of the book served as an instructor of South Vietnamese high schools during the Republican era and was a librarian for the University of Saskatchewan Library when he emigrated to Canada in 1981. Originally written in Vietnamese, the book was translated into English and provides the general outline of politics, debates, and activities of a host of both state and civil groups during the Military Interregnum. As both Đoàn Thêm’s and Lâm Vĩnh Thế’s works are non-academic, their analysis and portrayal of events are only utilized if corroborated by newspaper reports found in *Chính Luận* or *Tự Do*.

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The following are three historical chapters broken down in accordance with the national charters upon which administrations were based. The first chapter covers the political discourse and social upheavals occurring from November of 1963 to August of 1964 in what can be summarized as the “First Period of Military Rule.” This period spans the administrations of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ and Nguyễn Khánh. The civil administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ is included under this label because—at least officially—the RMC led by Dương Văn Minh was responsible for the political direction of this administration and both the Thơ and Khánh administrations were based on the Provisional Charter written by the RMC in November of 1963. The second chapter covers the period from September of 1964 to June of 1965—the “Period of Civil Rule.” This period entails the administrations of Trần Văn Hương and Phan Huy Quát which were both based on a Provisional Charter established in October of 1964 dictating the structure of civil governance. The last chapter covers the administration of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ

<sup>64</sup> CV 45-TT dated 8-25-1955 in *Về chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1955-1957 Tập 1: Tổ cộng năm 1955*, PTUDCTN, Fold. 52 and CV 115-TTP/ĐT/M dated 3-3-1962 in *1962 Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức học tập chính trị cho nhân viên PTT, PTTĐỊCH*, Fold. 20684.

<sup>65</sup> Đoàn Thêm, “*Những Ngày Chưa Quên*” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 228 (July 1, 1966), 25-34.

<sup>66</sup> Đoàn Thêm, *1965 Việc Từng Ngày* (Xuân Thu Xuất Bản: 1968), *1966 Việc Từng Ngày* (Xuân Thu Xuất Bản: 1968), *1967 Việc Từng Ngày* (Xuân Thu Xuất Bản: 1968).

which was based on the Provisional Constitution of June 1965 written by the generals who composed the Directorate. This period marked the “Second Period of Military Rule” and spans from June 1965 until the National Assembly Election in October 1967, ultimately inaugurating the Second Republic of Vietnam.

The first two chapters will focus primarily on the discourse and politics evident in the Republican civil society, demonstrating how politics and narratives were deployed by various social groups and how those narratives evolved from one social upheaval to the next. These first two chapters will primarily use the newspapers mentioned previously. The last chapter will integrate primary documents from the re-inaugurated PSP and sketch not only the political dimensions of civil society during the Kỳ administration, but also the ideological work attempted by the state. By doing so, it hopes to demonstrate how anticommunist and democratic discourse were utilized and evolved during this period of fraught tension between the Republican state and civil society.



CHAPTER 7: THE FIRST ERA OF MILITARY RULE

*Anti-Neutrality and the Collapse of a “Laggard” Administration*

Five days after the November Coup, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ—the former Vice-President of the First Republic—was named Premier of a new provisional government supported by the Revolutionary Military Council—a body composed of 12 military officers which served as the supreme military organ directing all matters of national security and the conduct of war. Dương Văn Minh, Chairman of the RMC, had staffed his leading military body with high ranking military officers who had deep involvement in the November Coup, leaving many South Vietnamese military officers who had a peripheral role to view the council as unrepresentative of the South Vietnamese military. The new Provisional Government was comprised primarily of civilians who, as one South Vietnamese general argued, were “technicians and not politicians.”<sup>1</sup>

From early on, criticisms emerged against Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ who was seen as subservient to the military-led junta. Amidst the criticism, Thơ warned the press to exercise responsibility for their newfound freedom, or his government would “take steps to meet the situation.” He denounced accusations of military control as a “sheer fabrication.” He implied that newspapers oppositional to his government were communists or neutralists, causing “doubt” and creating discord, and indulging in “demagoguery” and sensationalism aimed at “attracting readers.”<sup>2</sup> *Tự Do*, in early January, offered another perspective. In its editorial column “Lập Trường,” the newspaper argued that perhaps one of the key reasons for criticism of the Thơ administration was because it did not “come from the people.” In what is essentially a demand for democratic elections, the piece argues that the criticisms against the government would all disappear if it was actually democratically elected rather than chosen.<sup>3</sup>

However, whether it was the lack of democracy or subservience to the military, the death knell of the Thơ administration was its notorious laggard pace of operations. From the beginning, the RMC promised national elections would eventually be held to form a permanent rather than provisional civil administration. During the provisional phase, the RMC promised that “notables” would be “invited, representing all classes of society” to advise the Provisional Government in laying the foundations of democratic practices and institutions. This was in November of 1963.<sup>4</sup> It was not until January of 1964 that the “Council of Sages” was actually formed. Little restructuring was conducted at the lower levels of the regime leading some to question the actual progress of this proclaimed “revolution.”<sup>5</sup> The laggard nature attributed to the Thơ government, however, would not be catastrophic until mid-January when France officially recognized the People’s Republic of China.

France was an ongoing political thorn in South Vietnamese foreign relations in the post-Diem era. Beginning in August of 1963, French President Charles De Gaulle had been pushing

<sup>1</sup> “Saigon Junta is working on new cabinet; Buddhists expecting prompt recognition from US,” *The Sun*, Nov. 4, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> “Premier Cautions Saigon Newsmen: Purge Hinted,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Dec 11, 1963; Crackdown on Saigon Papers Threatened. *Los Angeles Times*, Dec 11, 1963; “Saigon Premier Cautions Press,” *New York Times*, Dec. 11, 1963.

<sup>3</sup> “Dân chúng muốn biết ngay: bao giờ có bầu cử và một chính phủ do nhân dân?” *Tự Do*, Jan. 9, 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Nguyễn Ngũ Í, “Khúc quanh Lịch Sử,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 1965 (Jan. 15, 1963), 88-94; Trần Thúc Linh et al., “Nhân Sĩ và Hội Đồng Nhân Sĩ,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 166 (Dec. 1, 1963), 51-63.

<sup>5</sup> This was most clearly articulated in Hoàng Lê Ngọc, “Chế Độ cũ thối nát quá! Chế độ mới chậm chạp quá!” *Tự Do*, Jan. 13, 1964; Liệt Anh in an editorial calls for “new people in the new government” and argues that “already two months had passed after the revolution but we have not seen anything new (Liệt Anh, “Cần phải có những con người mới trong chế độ mới,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 14, 1964.

for the “neutralization” of Vietnam—effectively warding the country from Soviet as well as American influences.<sup>6</sup> Apart from Vietnam, the other two Indochinese countries had long been neutral. Laos was granted neutral status via the Geneva Treaty of 1962 following the outbreak of the Laotian Civil War. As for Cambodia, since 1954, the country had adopted a policy of “positive neutralism” and accepted aid from both sides of the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> In November of 1963, however, Prince Sihanouk terminated all American aid to his country and, instead, invited France to replace the American as Cambodian benefactor.<sup>8</sup> It quickly became clear that Cambodia was moving towards closer relations with France and the “neutralization” project of Charles De Gaulle.<sup>9</sup> The sudden turn was extremely problematic for the new South Vietnamese administration. For one, its agenda emphasized “closer relations with neighboring countries”—countries which effectively withdrew their recognition of the Republic during the international debacle surrounding the Buddhist Crisis. As Cambodia increasingly moved closer to the “Gaullist” neutralist camp, anti-neutralist sentiments began simmering in South Vietnam—a simmering that was initiated not by the Republican government but rather by civil society.

As tension rose, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, some 2000 middle school students rallied a protest condemning France’s neutralist policies. Invoking long-held anticommunist consensus on the Geneva Accords, the students chanted “Who divided the country? France and the communists!” as they marched to various French-affiliated schools in the capitol. Largely unorchestrated, the protest forced the French Embassy to request increased security for itself and French property within the vicinity.<sup>10</sup> Urged by student protests, the Council of Sages on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January convened a meeting to discuss the issue of neutralism in Vietnam. In that discussion, Hoàng Cơ Bình, a council member, made this explicit his opposition to the weakness of the Thơ administration before the neutralist threat and decried the “inconsistent” nature of the administration in regard to neutralism. In their vote, all 48 of the attending members voted to openly denounce neutralist policies and requested the Thơ administration make public its position on neutralism.<sup>11</sup> Student protests erupted once again on the 17<sup>th</sup>, demanding “boycott of French imports, close all French schools, [and] refusal of work for French companies by Vietnamese workers.”<sup>12</sup> Demonizing both De Gaulle and Cambodia’s amorism of Gaullist neutralism, political pressures in South Vietnam forced the Ministry of Foreign Relations to

<sup>6</sup> “De Gaulle Sees US Hand In Vietnam Coup,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 7, 1963.

<sup>7</sup> “Sihanouk is backed on Saigon Break,” *New York Times*, Aug. 27, 1963; “Cambodia, a Land of Fun and Frustration,” *The Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 17, 1963.

<sup>8</sup> “US gets serious setback in SE Asia,” *The Guardian*, Nov. 20, 1963; “Paris Sees Move to Neutrality,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 22, 1963.

<sup>9</sup> “Thái Tử Sihanouk: Tôi Theo De Gaulle,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 9, 1964

<sup>10</sup> Both the Ministry of Education and the Capitol’s Student Union received news of the protest only at the last minute (“Tòa Đại Sứ Pháp Tuyên Bô Gì? Sau Cuộc Biểu Tình của Học Sinh Chiều 13-1 Chống Trung Lập,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 15, 1964). Western observers thought that the student protest was “government-inspired,” but alongside denouncing France’s neutralist policies, protestors also “handed out leaflets denouncing Premier Nguyen Ngoc Tho...[and] accused ho and other members of his government of working for the French Intelligence Agency as well as for the Diem regime overthrown last fall” (“2000 Saigon Students Protest De Gualle’s Call for Neutralism,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 14, 1964).

<sup>11</sup> “Hội Đồng Nhân Sĩ Thề Chống Trung Lập,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 16, 1964.

<sup>12</sup> “Biểu Tình trước Trung Tâm Văn Hóa Pháp,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 18, 1964.

reject Robert Du Gardier—an open supporter of De Gaulle’s neutralism—as the new French ambassador to Vietnam.<sup>13</sup>

As January wore on, neutralism became an increasingly hot political issue and frustration mounted against the silence of the Thơ administration. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, France officially recognized the People’s Republic of China. The move caused immediate uproar demanding the South Vietnamese government take measures against France. *Tự Do*, for example, ran multiple stories citing the negative international reactions to France’s move. In an editorial on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, *Tự Do* argues that “it is not only within the Vietnamese discussion that had condemned De Gaulle as illusioned, as trader of blood and bones of those people living [in Asia],” but similar arguments had been made by the Taiwanese, the Americans, the Britons, and the Germans. Indeed, for *Tự Do*, opposition to French neutralism was worldwide—near universal. The editorial served as an implicit critique on the silence of the Thơ administration amidst this international uproar against French neutralist policies.<sup>14</sup> As the newspaper warned, “Those who go against the historical flow of our people and that of humankind will soon die out and will be dragged along in the tides of time.”<sup>15</sup> The Council of Sages, as well, did its part in urging an anti-neutralist statement by the South Vietnamese government. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, the Committee for Foreign Affairs in the Council of Sages voted to “demand the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Phạm Đăng Lãm, make known the standpoint of the Government on this issue.”<sup>16</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, after a closed-door meeting, the Council of Sages “request[ed] that the Government end relations with the Government of France.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite these continuous demands for a direct anti-neutralist statement condemning France’s recognition of China, the Thơ government did not issue a formal declaration until the 28<sup>th</sup> of January—two weeks after the Council of Sages requested a formal declaration by the administration and 10 whole days after France’s recognition of China. The declaration, long overdue, came out just two days before Thơ’s administration came to an end. The document verified the role of France in allowing “half of Vietnam [to fall] to communism” and the role of China in perpetuating a war of “communist infiltration.” After all, “the Communist regime of the North is only able to prolong its infiltration of South Vietnam due to the positive support of Communist China.” France’s recognition “reinforces the position of Communist China, hurts the Free World, and, rather than stopping communism, encourages the communists to expand in Southeast Asia.” Because of these reasons, “the Government of the Republic of Vietnam

<sup>13</sup> “Việt Nam Không Chấp Nhận ông Du Gardier Làm Đại Sứ Pháp,” *Tự Do*, Jan 11, 1964; “Việt Nam Không Chấp Nhận ông Du Gardier Làm Đại Sứ Pháp,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 15, 1964. Although rejecting Du Gardier as ambassador, the administration’s position on France greatly wavered. On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Gen. Trần Văn Đôn—Defense Minister under Thơ—stated his opposition to neutralism in South Vietnam during his visit to Thailand, but argued that “the efforts to reconcile with Cambodia lays within the policy of the new government to build amity with neighboring countries” (“tuyên Bỏ của Trung Tướng Trần Văn Đôn Tại Vọng Các,” Jan. 18, 1964). In the press, demonization of Cambodia at points turned xenophobic. One example is poignant. A cholera outbreak in throughout southern provinces was blamed on Cambodia (“Bệnh Dịch Tả Từ Cam Bốt Lan Sang Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 18, 1964). *Tự Do* also glorified the anti-Sihanouk “Free Khmer” movement of Son Ngọc Thành which brought condemnation from the Cambodian government (“Son Ngọc Thành mở màn bí mật về công cuộc chống Sihanouk,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 11, 1964; “Vì bài báo Tự Do Gây Sôi Nổi TT Sihanouk được bầu làm Quốc Trưởng trọn đời,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 21, 1964).

<sup>14</sup> “Dư Luận Thế Giới Xúc Động vì Pháp Thừa Nhận Trung Cộng,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 21, 1964.

<sup>15</sup> “61 Phần Trần Dân Pháp Không Tan Thành Chính Sách Viển Đông của De Gaulle,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 23, 1964

<sup>16</sup> HĐ Nhân Sĩ Hợp Kín,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 22, 1964.

<sup>17</sup> “HĐ Nhân Sĩ yêu cầu Chánh Phủ đoạn giao với Pháp,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 24, 1964.

absolutely opposes the decision of the French government to recognize Communist China...[and] reserves the right to utilize all suitable means to cope with these new conditions caused by this absurd decision on the part of France.”<sup>18</sup>

This anti-neutralist statement by the South Vietnamese government was met with immediate measures by the Ministry of the Economy to boycott French products. Resolution 777-BKT/TNTV dated the 28<sup>th</sup> of January dictates that, outside of special cases, the Ministry will not accept import license for goods from France, as well as the import license of French nationals.<sup>19</sup> In the following days, the government began moving towards nationalizing French banks, closing French airlines (turning their flights to American and Japanese operators), and seeking to import from Japan in place of French products.<sup>20</sup>

Despite taking these measures, the Thơ government, clearly, did too little and too late. When Nguyễn Khánh and discontented members of the military moved against Dương Văn Minh on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, they did so on the charge that Minh—and five other generals—were “pro-neutralism and pro-France.” This charge was taken up as an accurate one by scholars like George Kahin who argued that both American and disaffected military officers saw signs that the Thơ administration and the Minh-led military junta was heading towards negotiated peace according to France’s design.<sup>21</sup> More recently, Robert Topmiller described the Minh-led administration as one composed “of prominent civilians and like-minded military leaders with the goal of seeking a neutral solution to the war through negotiated settlement with the NLF.” Supposedly in-line Buddhists’ aspirations, the Minh government was moving “to end an increasingly violent war.”<sup>22</sup> Multiple historical facets, however, goes against this conclusion.<sup>23</sup> Whether the administration was truly of “pro-neutralism and pro-France” is outside the concerns of this dissertation. The broad consensus in the Vietnam War literature, nevertheless, views the January coup as a political maneuver by those within the military who had either been ostracized

<sup>18</sup> “Tuyên Cáo của Chính Phủ Việt Nam Sau Khi Pháp Thừa Nhận Bắc Kinh,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 30, 1964.

<sup>19</sup> “Từ nay, Bộ Kinh Tế không cấp giấy phép nhập cảng hàng hóa Pháp,” *Tự Do*, Jan 30, 1964.

<sup>20</sup> “Quốc Hữu Hóa ngân hàng pháp?” *Tự Do*, Jan. 31, 1964.

<sup>21</sup> George McT. Kahin, “Political Polarization in South Vietnam: US Policy in the Post Diem Period,” *Pacific Affairs* 52(4), 1980, 647-673.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Topmiller, *The Lotus Unleashed*, (2002), 15-16.

<sup>23</sup> For one, the January coup faced against virtually no resistance from the Buddhists—nor the South Vietnamese press or any significant segment of the South Vietnamese society, for that matter. Furthermore, Minh—the man seeking that “neutral solution”—in his speech inaugurating the Council of Sages in January stated that, “with the circumstances and politics of our country today, tolerance for neutralism is to open the road for communism”—a statement not unlike one Diệm would had made a year before (“Trước sự hiện diện của HỘ QUỐC MINH và Chính Phủ Lâm Thời, Hội Đồng Nhân Sĩ Đã Ra Mặt,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 3, 1964). More to the issue, the administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ actually imposed several measures that signified its anti-neutralist position. In December of 1963, for example, the Thơ government barred the return of “neutralist and pro-Communist political exiles to South Vietnam” (“Neutrals in Exile Barred by Saigon: Pro-Reds also Kept Out—Unity talks Rejected.” *New York Times*, Dec. 10 1963). The Press Laws issued by Thơ’s Minister of Information, Đỗ Mậu, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of January made it explicit that that the “promo[tion of] communism or neutralism” was forbidden along with the “endanger[ment of] national security or the army’s morale... spread[ing] of false news...[and] slander” (“Chính Sách Mới về Thông Tin Báo Chí,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 17, 1964). Along with the passage of these laws, some 9 newspapers were closed down—one of which, *Dân Tộc*, was charged with “advocating for neutralist peace, class warfare of the communists” and was shut down indefinitely (“Đóng cửa 9 nhật báo: 5 vĩnh viễn, 4 trong 1 tháng,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 17, 1964). As one of its last acts, the Thơ government also passed guidelines for political parties which forbade parties that were communist or neutralist as well as “parties, organizations which previously served the nepotistic regime of the Ngô” (“Thông cáo của Bộ Nội Vụ về hoạt động của các đảng phái chính trị,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 30, 1964).

after the November assassination or felt they have not been properly rewarded to seize political power. Anti-neutralism, however, was effectively utilized to justify Khánh's ouster of Dương Văn Minh from the position of supreme national power. Furthermore, the laggard nature of the Thơ administration—one later caricatured as “slow as a turtle”<sup>24</sup>—placed much of civil society against the regime. By the time Khanh and his military junta marched their troops to topple Minh and force Thơ to resign, very little could have saved the administration from allegations of its incompetency.

Premier Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ had given an interview to the newspaper *France-Soir* on the issue of French recognition of China, only made public by the Vietnamese Press Agency on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January. In that interview, Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ's anti-neutralist position was clear. He explained why the Southern government delayed issuing a statement on the matter: “Many people had criticized the soft position of the government. This is because we [the government] want to respond amiably. We want to act with the dignity of a civilized people, but in reality, are very much enraged...enraged because France is destroying us, killing us, pushing us into a position of difficulty.” Indeed, while South Vietnam had made it clear internationally that it was anti-neutralist and anti-communist, for the Premier, it does not stand to reason why France would recognize the People's Republic of China—thus inevitably placing a strain on the historically good relationship between the Vietnamese Government and the French Government. The looming disaster of communist takeover through neutralism would not come to benefit France. And furthermore, it was the fault of France that Vietnam currently faces warfare and turmoil—a result of the division of the country through the Geneva Accords. And right when “the conditions of Vietnam are finally seeing progress since the Viet Cong increased their activities in November...France stabbed us in the back.” The effects on French policies, according to the Premier, were harsh: “the situation is reversing itself right when we finally attained a dominant hand before the enemy.”<sup>25</sup>

Thơ's position did not differ significantly from how the general Vietnamese press viewed the issue, and neither was it a departure from anti-neutralist sentiments during the First Republic. What the collapse of the Thơ administration did ultimately illustrate was the shift of ideological leadership to civil-societal components following the collapse of the Diệm administration. Anti-neutralist activities began with the students in early January. The first to respond to the French recognition of China was the press and the Council of Sages—a body composed of civilian “notables.” It was only after continuous agitation from civil-societal groups that the government finally made a declaration against France's policies. Given this popular adamancy against neutralism, it is little wonder then that the Khanh's administration that followed came out strongly against communism and neutralism—attempting to portray itself as an effective and reliable governing device that can properly respond to ideological demands of the South Vietnamese society.

### *Anti-Authoritarianism, Democracy, and the Rise of Religious Activism*

After 6 months in power, Nguyễn Khánh emerged from a closed-door meeting in Vũng Tàu on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July and announced that he had been “elected” as the “Chairman” of the

<sup>24</sup> “Đảng Đại Việt Năm Tay Thủ Tướng Chặt Chè Lúc Này Hơn Lúc Nào Hết,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 14, 1964.

<sup>25</sup> “Thủ Tướng Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ tuyên bố với một ký giả Pháp: Nước Pháp phá hoại chúng tôi, giết chúng tôi...” *Tự Do*, Jan. 28, 1964.

Vietnamese Republic. He presented the “Charter of the Republic of Vietnam” (or more popularly known as the Vũng Tàu Charter *Hiến Chương Vũng Tàu*) which effectively gave him, the Chairman, near dictatorial powers. Within 9 days, the Vũng Tàu Charter had been scrapped amidst waves of student and Buddhist protests against what they saw was an undemocratic, authoritarian regime. Protestors demanded general elections, the freedom of press, an end to martial law, a constituent assembly and civil rule. As the Vũng Tàu Charter was scrapped and a new administration was being drafted, Buddhist demonstrators clashed with Catholics in the streets of Huế, Đà Nẵng, and Saigon. In the capitol alone, 12 individuals on both sides were horrifically killed with hundreds of more injured. In the central cities, a Catholic hamlet went up in flames, patients in a US-run hospital were dragged from their beds and executed, and demonstrators attacked a US Army billet. In the capitol, Catholic and Buddhist youths squared off in front of a national radio station and at a technical school, and the news-van for *Xây Dựng* was torched.

Much of the seeds for this chaos was laid during the early days of the Khánh administration—measures that were initially designed to encourage democratic representation and civil activism in South Vietnam. Indeed, as one of his first moves as Premier, Khánh inaugurated a highly diverse cabinet composed of representatives from various religions, sects, and historically prevalent nationalist parties. His immediate aides—the 3 Deputy Premiers—represented the 3 regions of Vietnam: North, Central, and South.<sup>26</sup> What was most important, however, was that Khánh sought the advice and opinions of these diverse groupings in forming his cabinet in such a way that each of these political blocs were consulted in government formation. This eventually became a political precedent. The administration of Trần Văn Hương—the one that followed after Khánh—was originally opposed for refusing to adhere to this form of diverse consultation, and the administration Phan Huy Quát was originally well received because, as Stanley Karnow puts it, Quát “invited representatives from nearly all of South Vietnam’s feuding political, religious, and military factions into his cabinet.”<sup>27</sup>

These measures by Khánh encouraged the formation of a mobilized civil society. However, the political organizations that emerged, for the most part, fought amongst and within themselves for political influence and leadership. The emergence of the Republican civil society had begun under the Thơ administration. Under Thơ, registration policies had encouraged a number of nationalist parties once suppressed under the Diệm administration to publicly reemerge.<sup>28</sup> For example, the Social Democrats—a Hòa Hảo dominated organization—

<sup>26</sup> Dr. Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn—a leader in the Đại Việt Party—was named Deputy Premier of Pacification, an incredibly power position that oversaw all counterinsurgency, intelligence, and information policies of the administration. To balance this position held by the Đại Việt, Phạm Thái—a member in the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng—was named Minister of Information. The three Deputy Premiers under Khánh represented the three regions of Vietnam: Nguyễn Xuân Oánh—the Deputy Premier of Economics and Finance—was a northerner; Đỗ Mậu—the Deputy Premier of Social and Cultural Affairs—was from the Central region; and Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn came from the South. Representatives from the Duy Dân Party and the Hòa Hảo were also prominent in Khánh’s cabinet.

<sup>27</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: a History*, (Penguin Books, 1984), 385.

<sup>28</sup> On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, the Interior Ministry under Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ had called for registration of political parties. All that were required for registration of these parties were names and resumes of their leaders, address of headquarters, and listing of properties. Historically, however, historically prominent parties operated secretly and, even after the November Revolution, operated as they did under colonial times. Many were reluctant to operate publicly (“Các đảng phái chính trị cần điều chỉnh giấy phép,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 10, 1964; secrecy: “Nhân Dân đang chờ đợi những gì ở các đảng phái chính trị,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 30, 1964, “Thủ Tướng Khánh nói với các chính đảng: cần bước ra

reemerged on the 12<sup>th</sup> of January.<sup>29</sup> On the 18<sup>th</sup>, the Cao Đài religion formed “The United Committee of Cao Dai Veterans.”<sup>30</sup> Those that made public their operational charter advertised commitment to democracy and freedom as well as their anticommunist and anti-neutralist legacies.<sup>31</sup> Like a number of these historically-prevalent parties, other components of civil society also established representative organizations including railroad workers and journalists.<sup>32</sup>

Building on the political liberalization experienced under the Thơ administration, Khánh also implemented measures which greatly encouraged the political activities of nationalist parties. Press policies passed by the Khánh government, for example, signaled encouragement for party activities. Political parties were encouraged to form their own newspapers and, for the most part, were free to do so. Indeed, as long as the party had government issued documents allowing their activities—including those obtained under the previous administration—they were able to establish their own newsletters. A political party, after receiving these documents, simply had to wait for 48 hours before they began printing. Separate permission to establish a newspaper was not needed. This, however, stood in contrast with independently owned newspapers which still required regularly renewable permission from the Ministry of Information to remain active.<sup>33</sup> Apart from press leniency towards politically-affiliated periodicals, statements by Khánh and his administration regularly highlighted support for political parties to enter the public sphere and offered support for “oppositional” voices. Early on, Khánh, for example, sought the support of the Hòa Hảo which were historically suppressed by the Diệm administration. Touring An Giang Province in February—the political center of the Hòa Hảo sect—Khánh announced “complete support” for the religion before some 20,000 adherers and praised the sect’s “opposition from the start against the nepotistic regime of the Ngô Dynasty.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the Deputy Minister of Pacification, Dr. Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn announced on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February that the government “not only accept but honestly request the formation of parties and oppositional organizations...[insofar as these organizations] oppose constructively and oppose with honor rather than perfidiously.”<sup>35</sup> By June, 7 parties were active, 15 had been approved for political activity, and another 16 were under review.<sup>36</sup>

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khôi bí mật,” *Tự Do*, June 15, 1964; history of revolutionary parties: Nguyễn Gia Khánh, “Đề khai mào cho cuộc thảo luận: sơ trình về các đảng phái Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 4, 1964).

<sup>29</sup> Social Democrats had multiple names: *Đảng Dân Chủ Xã Hội* or *Xã Hội Dân Chủ Đảng* or *Đảng Dân Xã*; “Đảng Dân Chủ Xã Hội VN Ra Mắt,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 14, 1964.

<sup>30</sup> “Hai Lực Lượng của Giáo Phái Cao Đài đã hợp nhất,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 24, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> Social Democrat: “determined to oppose communism, oppose neutralism, prioritize freedom of beliefs, the press and discussion, and emphasize rural areas especially the Mekong Delta.” Opposition to communism and neutralism was similarly advocated for by the “National Revolutionary Organization of Vietnam” *Tổ Chức Toàn Quốc Cách Mạng VN* which emerged on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 1963 led by Dr. Phạm Huy Cơ (“Đảng Dân Chủ Xã Hội VN Ra Mắt,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 14, 1964).

<sup>32</sup> Union of Railroad Workers reorganized on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January after two years of inactivity (“Đại Hội Công Nhân Hỏa Xa Việt Nam miền Nam tại Tổng Liên Đoàn Lao Công Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 21, 1964). On that same day, the Journalist Trade Union elected its new body of representatives (“Nhiệm đoàn ký giả bầu ban quản trị mới,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 23, 1964).

<sup>33</sup> “Đóng cửa 13 tờ báo,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 21, 1964; “Sắc Luật Thủ Tướng Chánh Phủ,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 21, 1964.

<sup>34</sup> “Trung Tướng Nguyễn Khánh Tuyên Bố Tại An Giang,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 21, 1964.

<sup>35</sup> “Chánh Phủ không những công nhận đối lập...” *Tự Do*, Feb. 22, 1964.

<sup>36</sup> “12 Chính đảng được hoạt động,” *Tự Do*, June 8, 1964. Those in operation included were: Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnamese Nationalist Party), Đại Việt Duy Dân, Liên Minh Dân Chủ (Democratic Alliance), Dân Chủ Xã



Within this atmosphere of growing political activism, the political bloc that emerged as most organized and most dominant was that of the Buddhists. Buddhist mobilization efforts began with the formation of the Unified Buddhist Church following a national conference on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December intended to “bind religion and [secular] life.”<sup>37</sup> The Church unified the various branches of Buddhism under a single organization and, in doing so, established their political wing, the Buddhist Secular Institute *Viện Hóa Đạo*, which would serve to be a mobilizing vehicle for Buddhist politics for the years to come. The Church was officially recognized under the Khánh administration in May of 1964<sup>38</sup> and was permitted to raise some 20 million piastre to build what would become the Quốc Tử Pagoda—a Buddhist headquarter completed in August of 1964 covering more than 10 acres of land in the western edge of the capitol center utilized for all activities of the Church.<sup>39</sup> The groundbreaking for the Pagoda on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May was attended by not only Nguyễn Khánh but also numerous national and military leaders, including the ousted Dương Văn Minh who had been given the figurehead position of “Head of State.”<sup>40</sup> Governmental recognition, an enormous physical space of operation, and support by the highest-ranking military leaders in the land did much to build the political prestige of the Church.

While the nominal leader of the Unified Buddhist Church and head of the Secular Institute was Thích Tâm Châu, the Secretary General of the Monastic Institute—Thích Trí Quang—eventually came to be a militant leader within the Church with substantial support based in Huế. As Topmiller argues, the conflict between the moderate Thích Tâm Châu and the militant Thích Trí Quang greatly shaped the contours of Buddhist politics during the Interregnum.<sup>41</sup> However, for much of the Khánh administration, the Unified Buddhist Church largely focused on mass organization and establishing a political and economic foundation for their activities. Publicly, Buddhist leaders defended their Church against ongoing accusations of communist infiltration of their ranks, divisions in their leadership, and anti-government sentiments—accusations which grew in intensity as Buddhists gained political strength and recognition. The Buddhists eventually founded their religious newsletter *Hải Triều Âm* (the official forum of the Unified Buddhist Church) which carried not only theological and religious contemplation, but also political pieces—some of which expressed anti-government attitudes.

Early on, Buddhist and Catholic leaders joined together to ward off civil unrest and militant demands for retribution following the November Revolution. Indeed, in those the immediate days following the coup, news reports detailed sporadic violence against Catholic communities and clergy—particularly in the central region. The case of Fr. Nguyễn Cao Lộc in Huế was discussed at length in the press. The clergyman was physically assaulted, paraded and “denounced” along a 7km stretch in the district of Vĩnh Lộc and finally rescued by the local police. The case caused diverse reactions in the press with some condemning these acts as “a communist scheme to divide religions” while others argued that to report on the matter was

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Hội Đảng (Social Democrats), Liên Minh Cao Đài, and Đại Việt Quốc Dân Đảng (“Danh sách 8 đại diện đảng phái,” *Tự Do*, June 16, 1964).

<sup>37</sup> “Đại Hội Phật Giáo Thống Nhất: Xây Dựng Cơ Sở Xứng đáng cho Phật Giáo,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 3, 1964.

<sup>38</sup> “Chính Phủ Đã Công Nhận Giáo Hội Phật Giáo VN Thống Nhất,” *Tự Do*, May 16, 1964.

<sup>39</sup> Số 434-BNV/HC/NĐ dated Apr. 15, 1964, in *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT: 3031; “Xây Trung Tâm Phật Giáo,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 24, 1964; “Hiệu Triệu của Viện Hóa Đạo Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất Kiến Thiết Quốc Tử,” in *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT: 3031

<sup>40</sup> “Giáo hội phật giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất: Việt Nam Quốc Tử,” in BYT, 3031.

<sup>41</sup> Topmiller, 8.

“irresponsible” and only served to aid the enemy.<sup>42</sup> Following these events of retribution, the Buddhist leadership advised calm and cease these acts of vengeance because, as one leader puts it, “it was not only the Buddhists who were victims of the Ngô Family, but also honest Christians as well.” Others called upon the Buddhist faithful to live by their religion as the contributors of “cultural and moral foundation” and seek reconciliation and humility. It was only through this, according to the Reverend, was one to be true to Buddha’s teachings.<sup>43</sup>

Amidst popular agitation for retribution against the former regime, legal measures were implemented to ensure the “revolutionary justice” deployed was orderly and legally sanctioned. Law 6/SL-CT dated the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1963 signed by Dương Văn Minh had established measures to “punish the atrocities of the old regime.” These atrocities targeted the activities of high-ranking officials who “relied on their position or force” to commit the various crimes of extortion, suppression, rape, assassination, and persecution conducted against “nationalist entities that opposed the direction of the dictatorial regime of Ngô Đình Diệm.” Those accused were due to appear court, tried, and—if convicted—can face the maximum penalty of death.<sup>44</sup> Proceedings to try those arrested after the November Revolution did not occur until the Khánh administration. In the aftermath of the November Revolution, those who were suppressed and incarcerated—particularly the Buddhist community in Huế which initiated the rebellion against Diệm—called upon the “Revolutionary Government” to live up to its “revolutionary” promises.<sup>45</sup> This came to bear—most importantly and symbolically—on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February

<sup>42</sup> The newspaper *Việt Báo* saw the event as representative of “a communist scheme to divide religions...which had developed to extreme levels, absolutely dangerous.” The newspaper *Saigon* decried reports on the event calling it a “irresponsible” which only served the enemy. The newspaper *Sông Đạo* invoked the freedom of press, justifying its report on Nguyễn Cao Lộc. The paper “hope that religious communities timely raise their voice to condemn those out-of-control activities of number of individuals or communities.”

<sup>43</sup> Nguyễn Ngũ Í, “Đường Lối của Phật Giáo Hiện Tại,” *Bách Khoa*, 168 (Jan 1964), 100-104.

<sup>44</sup> Chính Lý, “Vấn Đề Trừng phạt các tội ác dưới chế độ Ngô Đình Diệm,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 10, 1964. Apart from arrest and trial of high-profile members of the “old regime,” the administrations following the November Revolution also sought the confiscation of property held by Ngô Đình Diệm, his entourage, and the various non-state organizations that politically operated for the regime. The Cần Lao Party, the National Revolutionary Movement, and the Women’s Solidary Movement had their property confiscated on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1963, and forcibly disbanded and legally barred from activity in January (NĐ 105-BNV/KS dated Jan. 30, 1964, *Tài Liệu của Hội Đồng Quân Nhân Cách Mạng, Thủ Tướng Phủ v/v giải tán đảng cần lao nhân vị, phong trào cách mạng quốc gia, phong trào liên đới phụ nữ năm 1963-1964*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 32132A). In January, the Union of National Revolutionary Civil Servants—once prominent under the First Republic—was effectively disbanded and its property were redistributed to various charities and ministries within the administration (“Giải tán liên đoàn công chức cách mạng quốc gia,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 11, 1964; property listing, confiscation, and redistribution, see *Hoạt Động của Chi Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia PHỦ Thủ Tướng năm 1963-1966*, PTTVNCH, Fold. 29697). While high-profile government personnel were brought before the court to answer for their “sins,” the Khánh administrations sought to lower the ranks of civil servants who rose to due affiliation with the Ngô Family. A number lost their pensions, and some were excised (“21 viên chức cảnh sát bị cách chức và mất hưu bổng,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 20, 1964; “Ban Quản Trị Phòng Thương Mại Saigon đổi mới,” *Tự Do*, June 12, 1964). Crimes tried in the Revolutionary Court would also include financiers of the Diệm family (Tham những quá 100.000đ sẽ bị kết án tử hình,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 20, 1964; “Tòa án đặc biệt sẽ xử đợt đầu độ 20 người,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 20, 1964).

<sup>45</sup> The removal of “old” personnel was far from being merely a state project. Indeed, voices in the South Vietnamese press were replete with demands for a “revolution at the root, in every branch [of government] particularly its personnel.” Liệu Anh, a resident of Qui Nhon argued that to make revolutionary progress, a complete overhaul of the Republican administration was needed: “only by tossing out all the poisonous weeds, by completely cleansing all putrid cancer of the past can tomorrow’s polity be healthy once again.” The argues that “two months have passed but we have not seen anything new.” Members of the old regime remains in high positions, “still eating above and

when the Khanh administration instituted a “Revolutionary Court” designed specifically to try the crimes of personnel belonging to the former Diem regime.<sup>46</sup> Essentially a military tribunal, a number of high-profile individuals from the “old” regime were tried and sentenced before the court,<sup>47</sup> with many of whom were sentenced to long years of hard labor and imprisonment.

The most high-profile case of the era was that of Ngô Đình Cẩn—the youngest brother of the Ngô’s. While Cẩn would be tried in mid-April of 1964, interest in the case began as early as February. The main question early on was whether Cẩn would be tried in Huế—the location of his alleged crimes—or Saigon.<sup>48</sup> Cẩn had been the “Lord of the Central Region” during the Diệm era and was seen as holding the ultimate responsibility for all the atrocities of old regime in the region. Prior to the trials of Cẩn, Phan Quang Đông—the former head of intelligence in the Central region—was brought before the Revolutionary Court in Huế on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March. The operational connections between the two during the Diệm era made both complicit in the alleged crimes. The crux of the allegation against both Cẩn and Đông revolved around their participation in the death of Võ Côn (Jan. 1959), Trần Bá Nam (May 1958) and Nguyễn Đắc Phương (May 1957) as well as the arrest and extortion of a number of individuals in Huế, Đà Nẵng, and Quảng Ngãi often on charges of being spies for French colonialists. The indictment against Cẩn and Đông were assassination, plan to conduct murder, wrongful imprisonment, financial fraud and monopolizing national finances through illegal economic activities. Extortion conducted by the two men ranged from a few hundred thousand to several million piastres.<sup>49</sup>

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seated before (*ăn trên ngòai trước*)...especially at the provincial and commune level.” Thus, the author “demand[s] of the new regime to be composed entirely of the young and pure components [of society] with a revolutionary and progressive heart who knows only to fight for the general good, for equality, for freedom and for the Vietnamese Fatherland” (“Cẩn phải có những con người mới trong chế độ mới,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 14, 1964). An alternative case was made by Lê Vĩnh Bằng who argued that an “old” person is able to acquire a “youthful soul” *tâm hồn trẻ trung* to also mean a member belonging to the “old” regime who adhered to new ideals of the revolution) there was no reason for that individual to not be utilized by the new administration (“Thế nào là chế độ cũ, chế độ mới?” *Tự Do*, Jan. 15, 1964). Whether a complete removal of former government employees or a partial one, the consensus was clear. Reformation of the political body—particularly removing the “old” elements by either reform or excision was necessary for a “new” regime to emerge.

<sup>46</sup> SL 4/64 dated Feb. 28, 1964. Thông Cáo Số 11-TTP/ĐL dictating the components of the law. Components of the court (in order of rank): Lê Văn Thụ, Colonel Trần Văn Chương, Colonel Đặng Văn Quang, Colonel Nguyễn Văn Chuẩn, Lt. Colonel Nguyễn Văn Nghĩa, Major Nguyễn Văn Đức, Captain Trần Văn Thục, Trần Minh Tiết (Đã Thiết lập tòa án cách mạng,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 2, 1964).

<sup>47</sup> Trần Kim Tuyền (the former overseer of the Strategic Hamlet Program), Đặng Sỹ (officer who ordered troops to fire on the crowds of Buddhists in May of 1963, Bùi Văn Lương (former Information Minister), Ngô Trọng Hiếu (former Minister of Civic Commissariat) and Nguyễn Văn Y (former Chief of Police).

<sup>48</sup> “Vụ cố sát 2 ông võ côn và nguyên đốc phương: Ngô Đình Cẩn bị bắc đơn thượng tố án lệnh của ông dự thẩm,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 28, 1964; “Lập một tòa án đặc biệt để xử các ‘hung thần’” *Tự Do*, Feb. 19, 1964.

<sup>49</sup> “Ngày 16-4-64: Tòa án cách mạng họp tại Saigon tội trạng của Ngô Đ. Cẩn và Phan Quang Đông,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 16, 1964; “Vụ Cố sát 2 ông Võ Côn và Nguyễn Đắc Phương: Ngô Đình Cẩn bị bắc đơn thượng tố án lệnh của ông dự thẩm,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 28, 1964; detailed indictment provided in “Bản Cáo Trạng của Tòa Án Cách Mạng,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 2 (Mar. 28, 1964), 3, 14. Nguyễn Đắc Phương was a contractor in Huế who was accused of transporting opium and a spy for the French. After being arrested on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1957, he pronounced dead by suicide by the then Chief of Police in Huế, Trần Văn Hương, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. The death of Nguyễn Đắc Phương, according to the indictment, did not immediately implicate Phan Quang Đông, but rather Ngô Đình Cẩn—who directed all cover-up operations in the region—and Trần Văn Hương—who had arrested Phương. Trần Bá Nam was arrested as he traveled with his wife and child from Savannakhet back to Huế. He was taken into custody and was charged with being a spy for France and was tortured. Beaten to near death, Nam was thrown into a well and was declared death by suicide. His funeral was rushed, and the family was forced to conceal the body during the funeral. Phan Quang Đông was immediately

As Huong Thi Diu Nguyen in her dissertation demonstrated, the ancient Capitol of Huế following the November Revolution was a hotbed of political mobilization and agitation for retribution against officials once belonging to the “old regime.”<sup>50</sup> In Huế, protests had erupted in late November demanding punishment for Ngô Đình Cẩn, Maj. Đặng Sỹ who was alleged to be directly involved in the May 1963 suppression, and Lt. Gen. Đỗ Cao Trí who purportedly protected Ngô Đình Cẩn following the November Coup.<sup>51</sup> In March of 1964, these sentiments had not abated. Jeers and laughter from crowds of civilians who attended the proceedings were levied against Phan Quang Đông as he denied all wrongdoings and hailed his nationalism, anti-colonialism, and commitment to his country. In the charges levied against him, Đông sought to displace the ultimate blame on Cẩn who—absent from the trial in Huế—was depicted as the mastermind behind the arrests, imprisonment, torture, and cover ups. Indeed, the fact that Ngô Đình Cẩn was not tried alongside Phan Quang Đông in Huế sparked public consternation amongst its residents.<sup>52</sup> As the reaction to the trial of Phan Quang Đông in Huế threatened chaos, subsequent trial sessions were moved to Saigon.<sup>53</sup>

Throughout his trial in April, Ngô Đình Cẩn maintained his innocence and consistently argued that he was simply an informal advisor to the President and thus held no power to order any of the alleged crimes. His plea of innocence, however, stood in contradiction to numerous eyewitness testimonies from not only victims and family members, but also police officers and civil servants who served under Cẩn and Đông, and defected guerrillas and communists. These testimonies bore light on the magnitude of repression under the First Republic, the governmental abuse of political labels, the measures taken to cover up these criminal acts, and implicated a host of individuals including Trần Văn Hương who ironically would become the next Premier in late October. Beyond eye witness accounts of torture and assassinations, testimonies also highlighted the extent of extortion and the confiscation of property from victims bolstering the

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implicated in this case as he and Cẩn were amongst those who chased down Nam in the initial arrest. Đông denied manipulation of documents for the cause of death. He implicated Ngô Đình Cẩn as the official who gave orders for the arrest. Ngô Đình Cẩn denied giving the orders. Võ Côn was the Deputy Director of the Central Region Police. He was alleged to oppose the activities of Cẩn. He was arrested on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1958 after being transferred to Qui Nhon and was tortured throughout his 4-month imprisonment. As argued in the indictment, when his family came to visit him on his death bed at Huế Hospital, he was tortured to a point in which “he could not talk and could not recognize his wife and children.” He died on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1959. Phan Quang Đông admitted to the imprisonment and torture of Võ Côn per order of Ngô Đình Cẩn but denied immediate involvement in his death. He cites that he was in Saigon during the time of death. Ngô Đình Cẩn denied the allegation.

<sup>50</sup> 229-234.

<sup>51</sup> “Punishment urged for Can Followers,” *The Sun*, Nov. 23, 1963; “Vietnam Holdovers From Diem Regime Arouse Resentment,” *New York Times*, Nov. 29, 1963.

<sup>52</sup> *Lập Trường*, for example, demanded that “Ngô Đình Cẩn [be] brought to Huế to be tried in a nearby court.” Indeed, with an implicit warning, the journal argued that “the people [of Huế] are willing to follow the administration if it believes in the administration’s good will.” The journal called upon the administration for transparency and information on why Ngô Đình Cẩn cannot be tried in Huế (“Dân Chúng thất vọng vì Ngô Đình Cẩn vắng mặt trong phiên xử ngày 26-3-1964,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 2 (Mar. 28, 1964), 2).

<sup>53</sup> The delayed trial of Cẩn in Saigon was not taken well by *Lập Trường* which condemned the lack of continuity from one trial to the next. Moreover, it called for the trial of the entire Diệm regime with all of those indicted and witnesses to appear (“Xử Án,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 5 (Apr. 18, 1964), 2). Music was played and sheet music passed out before Cẩn’s first day of trial in Saigon so that people would be “entertained” when waiting for the accused to arrive at the courthouse (“Đã Điểm rôi: giờ đèn tội của Ngô Đình Cẩn,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 17, 1964).

wealth of the Ngô Family. Based on the evidence provided through these testimonies, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, Cấn and Đông were condemned to death by a firing squad.

The trials of Ngô Đình Cấn and Phan Quang Đông was—in many ways—more political than it was legal. Little new evidence actually surfaced that contributed concretely beyond what was already alleged in the original indictments—the corruption, coercion, and violence conducted under the old regime by orders passed down from the highest in the echelon. It must be noted that virtually all the evidence against Cấn and Đông were from eye witnesses and circumstantial. Eye witnesses, however, gave the victims of these crimes a human face and fostered increasing resentment against the accused. Indeed, whether testimonies were blunt or emotional, these testimonies demonstrated to the South Vietnamese public that these crimes—concealed from the public by the old regime—did occur, that they did affect real human beings, and the November Revolution was very much in the right. Adamant maintaining of innocence by the accused did little to benefit their position.

The press, in large part, contributed to the effects of the trials. Sympathetic to the victims rather than the accused, the press painted a dramatic portrait around the deaths of Võ Côn, Trần Bá Nam and Nguyễn Đắc Phương. The death of Võ Côn was described as an atrocity. As *Tự Do* argued, “although the victim was a high ranking official in the police force, because he refused to blindly follow the regime of Ngô Đình Diệm thus was imprisoned and tortured savagely.”<sup>54</sup> In court, Đình Thị Hồng, the wife of Nguyễn Đắc Phương, was brought to testify. *Tự Do* described the scene: “Hồng was so emotional when reminded of the painful death of [her husband] thus cried so excruciatingly before the court that many in the audience to cry as well.”<sup>55</sup> As for the defendant, Ngô Đình Cấn—who sought allowances in court for his diabetes—was cited as having “smirked” when asked for his plea following testimonies. Reportedly, Cấn stated that those who testified against him “feared responsibility, fear me so they placed the blame on me.”<sup>56</sup>

*Lập Trường* best summarized the significance of these trials. Calling the trials against Cấn and Đông a “Historical Case” *Vụ Án Lịch Sử*, the journal argued that “whether the government receives the confidence of the people or not is based upon these trials of the Revolutionary Court. And this Revolutionary Court derived from the Revolutionary government. The people desire to see the Revolution before their own eyes through the trials and enactment of these judgments. Only then will the people want to hear of revolution, and the perpetrators will know what revolution truly is!”<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the revolutionary legitimacy of the Khánh administration rests on the outcome of these trials. The trials were not a demonstration of judicial or legal capabilities, but rather the commitment of the administration to the ideals of the November Revolution.<sup>58</sup> Since the fall of

<sup>54</sup> “Đây bản án của tòa án cách mạng hồi 21 giờ 05 đêm 22-4-64: Ngô Đình Cấn: Từ Hình,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 24, 1964.

<sup>55</sup> “Phiên xử sáng 20-4-64: Cấn đã nói được đề khai,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 21, 1964.

<sup>56</sup> “Phiên xử sáng ngày 21-4-64 Chung quanh cái chế mờ ám của nhà thầu Trần Bá Nam,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 22, 1964.

<sup>57</sup> “Xử Án,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 5 (Apr. 18, 1964), 2.

<sup>58</sup> In another editorial *Lập Trường* decries the constant questioning of whether Ngô Đình Cấn had the authority to order the crimes. Such line of questioning demonstrates that the administration followed judicial process, but by doing so, the administration was “using justice to kill justice, relying on democracy to distort democracy.” Indeed, amidst the plea for pardon, the journal demanded the execution of Cấn because it would signify “the death of the old regime...the representation of the old regime, [Cấn’s] death must not be because he ordered the death of a few individuals.” The trials, for the journal, “is a test...for the administration, for the present national policy.” The journal argued that “If it wants to live, the administration must rely on the will of the people” and that a pardon would mean

the First Republic, alongside demands for democracy, citizens had been pushing for retribution and punishment against members of the old regime. That retribution was, for *Lập Trường*, “see[ing] the Revolution” with their own eyes. It is little wonder that despite the multitude of pleas for clemency—from US officials, the Archbishop of New York Francis Spellman, and even 2 high-ranking Buddhist leaders<sup>59</sup>—the Khánh administration maintained the ruling of the Revolution Court on *Cần* and *Đông*.<sup>60</sup> When the convicted were finally executed on 9<sup>th</sup> of May, it legitimized the anti-*Cần* Lao discourse that would shape Republican politics for the months to come.

While the trials of *Cần* and *Đông* did not directly involve the Buddhist community, the trial of *Đặng Sỹ* did. Originally scheduled to immediately follow the *Cần* and *Đông* trials, *Maj. Đặng Sỹ* did not appear before court until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June. The delay was most likely a result of the possibility of popular agitation due to the political-religious sensitivity of the trials. Indeed, although *Đặng Sỹ* was originally due to appear in *Huế*, the trials—after multiple rounds of transportation—were held in Saigon instead.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, while the execution orders on *Ngô Đình Cần* saw pleas for pardon from international Catholic leaders, it was not until the *Đặng Sỹ* trials did Catholic opposition begin to publicly manifest. The political-religious tensions brought about by the trials of the Revolutionary Court made it ideal for the Khánh administration to delay the trials of *Đặng Sỹ* until the end of the celebrations surrounding the 1964 Vesak—a celebration that was as significant politically as it was religious.<sup>62</sup>

The execution of *Cần* and *Đông* came just 2 weeks before the 1964 commemoration of the Vesak Holiday (Buddha’s Birthday). On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, some 232,000 people visited an exhibition on the Buddha at Tao Đàn Park in Saigon.<sup>63</sup> On the 26<sup>th</sup>, some 80,000 Buddhist Faithful gathered around a giant Udumbara tree connected to a 40-foot statue of the Buddha placed on the banks of the Saigon River adjacent to Nguyễn Huệ street. The marchers then marched through adjoining avenues to finally come to the memorial of Thích Quảng Đức—the monk who self-immolated himself in protest of the Ngô regime in June just a year earlier.<sup>64</sup> The celebration of the Vesak in 1964 signified the political strength of the Buddhist community since

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“a surrender to the old regime” (“Ngô Đình Cần: Hành Quyết Hay Không Hành Quyết,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 6, Apr. 25, 1964).

<sup>59</sup> “US Attempts to Save Diem’s Brother Told,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 1964; “Two Monks Urge Clemency for Brother of Diem,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 25, 1964; “US Asks Mercy for Diem’s Brother,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 7, 1964.

<sup>60</sup> “Đại Sứ Cabot Lodge Cho Biết: Mỹ Đagn Vận Động Cứu Cần,” *Tự Do*, May 9, 1964; “4 ngày nữa sẽ xử tử ngô đình cần và phan q. đông,” *Tự Do*, May 7, 1964.

<sup>61</sup> “Định đoạt số phận Đặng Sỹ,” *Tự Do*, June 3, 1964.

<sup>62</sup> It is possible that the decision to move the trial of *Đặng Sỹ* to Saigon was partially due to the chaos that erupted on the day of *Đông* and *Cần* execution. *Đông* was executed in *Huế* while *Cần* was executed in Saigon. In *Huế*, 50,000 people crowded the execution site. On that same day, a chaotic protest broke out at the Independence Stadium in *Huế* demanding that *Ngô Đình Cần* be executed in *Huế* rather than in Saigon. 2 injuries resulted from scuffles (“Trước 50.000 đồng bào Huế Phan Qu. Đông đã gục chết,” *Tự Do*, May 12, 1964; “Bao vây quân vụ thị trấn Huế,” *Tự Do*, May 12, 1964); see also: “Vi phiên tào trùng vào thời gian có lễ Phật Đản dời ngày xử đặng sĩ,” *Chính Luận*, May 16, 1964.

<sup>63</sup> “232.000 người thăm triển lãm Phật Đản,” *Tự Do*, May 27, 1964.

<sup>64</sup> “80.000 Đồng Bào Thủ Đô: Diễn Hành Mừng Phật Đản,” *Tự Do*, May 27, 1964; *Chính Luận* counted 500,000 total participants for the Vesak Holiday (“Năm Triệu phật tử từ bốn phương kéo về lễ đài như thác cuốn mừng ngày trăng tròn tháng Vesaka.” *Chính Luận*, May 27, 1964). In attendance were Nguyễn Khánh and Dương Văn Minh as well as representatives from other religions.

repression a year earlier and the consolidation of victories achieved in the November Revolution. Indeed, in his statement during the 1964 Vesak celebration, Thích Tâm Châu reappraised his congregation of the trials that the Buddhists had to overcome during “religious victimization” *pháp nạn* of the year before and declared that Buddhists had “brought back the freedom of belief for humanity, brought back new hope for the people over so many years of darkness and had awakened the humanity after so many years which had forgotten their own spirit.”<sup>65</sup> Seizing upon that “Torch,” Buddhists reminded the public of their immolations, deaths, and sacrifices to “protect righteousness [and] mobilization for the Freedom of Beliefs and religious equality.”<sup>66</sup>

Following this political commemoration of those “years of darkness,” the Đặng Sỹ trials were held. The trials revolved around the involvement of the Đặng Sỹ in the death of 8 youths and the injuries of 10 other individuals due to “explosives” in front of the Huế radio station on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1963—the date that began the infamous Buddhists Crisis. The main charge against the Major was “weighted responsibility in intent to conduct murder.” Far more tamed than the Cần and Đông trials,<sup>67</sup> the families of the victims, for the most part, requested restitution for their loss.<sup>68</sup> Establishing criminality for Đặng Sỹ was complicated in that the accused was only a Major at the time of the event—a middle ranking officer.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, it was possible that those who outranked Đặng Sỹ at the time of the incident held more grievous responsibility: Lt. Gen. Đỗ Cao Trí (who was the Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Corps in 1963), Lt. Gen. Lê Văn Nghiêm (Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division—the most northeastern part of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Corp) and Nguyễn Văn Đăng (the Provincial Chief at the time). All three were appraised of protests by Đặng Sỹ during the incident and the Major was directly ordered by Nguyễn Văn Đăng to disperse the crowd. Beyond the issue of ultimate responsibility, it was unclear if the explosive that killed the 8 victims came from the troops (who were issued MKIII grenades) or from some other party.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> “Lời Tuyên Bố khai mạc đại lễ Phật Đản 2.508 của Thượng Tọa Viện Trưởng Viện Hóa Đạo,” *Chính Luận*, May 27, 1964.

<sup>66</sup> Thích Ca Mâu Ni Phật, “Nhân đại lễ Phật Đản 2.508 Thông Điệp của Đức Tăng Thống GHPGVNTN,” *Chính Luận*, May 16, 1964; see also a reflective editorial on the Buddhist suppression and resistance by Trần Thái, “Nhắc Lại những ngày lịch sử dưới chế độ độc tài kỳ thị tôn giáo,” *Chính Luận*, May 20, 1964.

<sup>67</sup> This was in part—according to *Tự Do*—due to the fact that only persons immediately involved in the trials (accused, victims and families, eye witnesses, lawyers, judges, and plaintiffs) are allowed into the court room. The trials did not have a broadcast system as the Cần and Đông trials. Those who were allowed to view the proceedings “must have special documents issued by the Presider of the Revolutionary Court” (“Định đoạt số phận Đặng Sỹ,” *Tự Do*, June 3, 1964).

<sup>68</sup> Translated from “cố sát với trường hợp gia trọng.” Crimes, indictment, and components court: “Thành Phần Tòa Án,” *Chính Luận*, June 3, 1964; “Sau bao lần dòm dõ, sáng 2-6 Tòa Cách mạng nhóm xử Vụ Đặng Sỹ với nhiều điểm pháp lý gay cần nẩy lửa,” *Chính luận*, June 3, 1964. Those who died were aged 12-20 years old; 6 were girls, 2 were boys.

<sup>69</sup> Major is the OF-3 class officer, the lowest rank in the colonel class. Major only outranks the Captain class and the Lieutenant (the lowest officer rank in the army).

<sup>70</sup> Legally, the charge of “weighted responsibility in intent to conduct murder” by the prosecutor meant that establishing Đặng Sỹ’s responsibility and intention to kill the victims or the members of the party in which the victims belonged to was crucial for a full conviction in the case. As to the issue of the lethal “explosives,” evidence would necessarily rely on expert testimony (“Sau bao lần dòm dõ, sáng 2-6 Tòa Cách Mạng nhóm xử Vụ Đặng Sỹ,” *Chính Luận*, June 5, 1964; “Vụ Án lịch sử: Ngô Đình Cần—Phan Quang Đông,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 2 (Mar. 28, 1964), 2, 4, 16)

As it was with the Đông and Cấn trials, what mattered was not legality or the weight of evidence against the accused, but rather the political significance of the outcome. The crux of the prosecution's case against Đặng Sỹ relied on testimonies from Sỹ's military and administrative superiors to build a case that Sỹ had contravene proper protocol in the deployment of troops against protestors and establish intent in the use of MKIII offensive grenades to disperse the crowds rather than tear gas. Apart from testimonies of proper protocol, assessment of the MKIII grenade's lethality, and whether or not troops were issued by Sỹ's superiors, eye witness testimonies by Sỹ's subordinates were also utilized to point to establish that Sỹ had thrown two grenades and ordered his troops to fire into the crowd after being heckled by stones. This establishes immediate culpability in the death of the 8 victims. Sỹ's defense primarily relied on pointing blame at his superiors who had issued the order to disperse the protestors and contested their denial of issuing of military troops (rather than the police) to fulfill the task. While some 15 grenades were thrown and excessive use of force was acknowledged by the defendant, Sỹ denied ever having thrown a grenade and only fired 3 flare shots during the incident. The excessive use of force was blamed on "a number of undisciplined soldiers who violated my orders."<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps one of the key weaknesses of Sỹ's defense was his allegation that MKIII grenades—technically classified as an offensive grenade—can be used to disperse protestors if they were thrown "very far away from our compatriots" and that the grenade "does not have the capability to cause [the alleged] harm."<sup>72</sup> As argued by Đặng Sỹ, the MKIII grenades were used instead of teargas because the latter was unavailable to the military—an allegation that his superiors flatly denied. Apart from this, the evidence against Sỹ—like Cấn and Đông—were circumstantial. The trials, in fact, brought to the stand witnesses who contradicted the narrative of the prosecution.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, Sỹ pointed to the religious nature of the trial and implied religious discrimination in the proceedings. According to Sỹ, during his imprisonment since the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, he had been regularly induced by guards and interrogators to claim that it was former Archbishop of Huế Ngô Đình Thục<sup>74</sup>—the second oldest brother of the Ngô's—who had forced him to deploy force against the Buddhist protestors. In essence, such an allegation would

<sup>71</sup> It was revealed that the Major had tossed two grenades (one of which was identified as not an MKIII grenade) into the crowds of protestors after being heckled with stones which initiated a full onslaught on the protestors. This was heavily relied on to establish immediate culpability resulting in the death of the 8 victims. According to one of these witnesses, after the incident, Đặng Sỹ had convened his men, thrown a stone at soldier, and asked whether the stone hurt. The soldier stated that it did not hurt and Đặng Sỹ replied that "although it does not hurt but it is humiliating thus he had to act" ("3 phiên nhóm đầu tiên—rất sôi động—xử vụ tàn sát trước đài Phát Thanh Huế," *Chính Luận*, June 4, 1964; "Theo Đặng Sĩ, 2 nhân chứng này là chứng có 'cố tình mưu hại Sỹ,'" *Chính Luận*, June 4, 1964; "Vụ án tàn sát đêm phật đàn—phiên xử thứ 3-4-5: Đ. Sỹ trút tội cho Tỉnh Trưởng," *Chính Luận*, June 5, 1964; "phiên tòa thứ 5-6-7- xử vụ tàn sát đêm phật đàn: Có nhân chứng không đồ ý về tội trạng của Đặng Sỹ," *Chính Luận*, June 6, 1964; "Phiên tòa thứ 5-6-7 xử vụ tàn sát đêm phật đàn: Nhân chứng chót: Bùi V Lương nguyên Bộ trưởng Nội vụ chế độ Ngô Đình Diệm," *Chính Luận*, June 8, 1964).

<sup>72</sup> "3 phiên nhóm đầu tiên—rất sôi động—xử vụ tàn sát trước đài Phát Thanh Huế," *Chính Luận*, June 4, 1964; "Đại tá Hiền nói tại tòa về vụ Đặng Sỹ: Nạn nhân chết vì plastic của VC," *Tự Do*, June 5, 1964.

<sup>73</sup> One of the key evidence for Sỹ was when a witness argue that it was "plastic explosives" set by the communists which caused the deaths rather than MKIII grenades. There were also contradictions in testimonies, including one which recalled that he did hear the Provincial Head Nguyễn Văn Đăng order Sỹ to use military troops ("Đại tá Hiền nói tại tòa về vụ Đặng Sỹ: Nạn nhân chết vì plastic của VC," *Tự Do*, June 5, 1964; "Phiên xử thứ 5 của Đặng Sỹ Các Nhân Chứng khai khác nhau," *Tự Do*, June 6, 1964).

<sup>74</sup> Thục was in Rome for the Second Vatican during the November Revolution and remained in exile.



relieve him of his charges and allow for further evidence against another member of the Ngô Family, the political target of the Revolution.<sup>75</sup>

The Đặng Sỹ trials differed from the Đông and Cẩn trials not only because of it was immediately related to one of the primary grievances of the Buddhist community, Buddhists were immediately involved in the prosecution. Thích Trí Quang—witness to the casualties—had given a statement included in the court’s indictment and was heavily relied on in the trials. Thích Trí Quang’s statement was crucial in clearing Nguyễn Văn Đãng of any responsibility for the deaths. For one, the Reverend’s testimony established that Đãng was present in the radio station during the incident negotiating with the protestors. For another, Đãng sought to protect the protestors by calling upon the troops to cease their use of fire hoses to disperse the crowd. This was crucial as one of the final arguments made by the defense was that a conviction of Đặng Sỹ must necessarily also implicate Nguyễn Văn Đãng who originally ordered Sỹ to put down the protest.<sup>76</sup> While no testimonies from civilian participants in the protests were given apart from Thích Trí Quang, the testimony of medical corps officer Trần Thanh Tùng painted a horrid picture of the burned and mutilated brought into his hospital on the day in question. The testimony further pointed to the trauma of the event and psychological impact that was still being felt by victims and their families.<sup>77</sup>

Prior to the Đặng Sỹ trials, *Lập Trường* carried an emotionally-laden commemoration of the youths who had died in the Buddhist Massacre. Alongside photographs of the victims, a contributor writes poetically of the tragedy<sup>78</sup> mourning the loss of the young “lotus flowers” but recasts their deaths as a “martyrdom” that “open[ed] the general struggle for the people to complete a new historical mission.” In that same piece, the author pointed blame at Đặng Sỹ and charged his crimes to the “our regime which had created individuals like Đặng Sỹ, individuals who are willing to shed blood and murder these children.” The piece tied the tragedy to the larger struggle for democracy and freedom—“the fire of the Vietnamese revolution”—as well as the significance of the Vesak. Connected to the piece was an excerpt from Thích Trí Quang which pointed to the general significance of death and the eternity of the human soul. But this excerpt—like the article—also pointed to the tragedy caused by Đặng Sỹ. As the Reverend writes, “I, up until now, still cannot come to terms as a person who witnesses a mound of flesh and bones thrown against a wall, blood, flesh, and bones of those whom I love who had just smiled with me just ten minutes before.” The piece demonstrates the emotionality attached to May 8, 1963 for the Buddhist community in Vietnam and how the narrative of democracy,

<sup>75</sup> His continuous reference to the religious impartiality of the trials forced a warning from the Presider who argued that the trials was not indicting him on his religious affiliation but rather on the crime of “intent to murder” (“Đặng Sỹ: Chỉ Thi Hành Lệnh Trên,” *Tự Do*, June 4, 1964; “3 phiên nhóm đầu tiên—rất sôi động—xử vụ tàn sát trước đài Phát Thanh Huế,” *Chính Luận*, June 4, 1964). Sỹ also sought to discredit the testimonies of his subordinates by arguing that those who testified against him had gained rank since the November revolution

<sup>76</sup> “Sau 5 ngày xét xử tòa tuyên án: Đặng Sỹ: Chung Thân Khổ Sai,” *Tự Do*, June 9-10, 1964. Indeed, relying on the implicit religious nature of the event, Nguyễn Văn Đãng defended himself by stating that “I myself am a Buddhist and there was no reason for me to order the slaughter of my Buddhist compatriots” (“phiên tòa thứ 5-6-7- xử vụ tàn sát đêm phật đản: Có nhân chứng không đồ ý về tội trạn của Đặng Sỹ,” *Chính Luận*, June 6, 1964).

<sup>77</sup> “Đại tá Hiên nói tại tòa về vụ Đặng Sỹ: Nạn nhân chết vì plastic của VC,” *Tự Do*, June 5, 1964.

<sup>78</sup> “12 months has passed. A holy night filled with blood. 9 o’clock. You still stood there, next to your family.” But soon they were gone. “Your souls are transforming into lotus flowers, and when the lotus blooms, you will hear the teachings of the Buddha. The golden words of the Buddha—especially for you—are gracefully accepted this night.”

revolution, and change were attached to the significance of the event.<sup>79</sup> Buddhist sentiments towards the event undoubtedly fueled the ultimate conviction on Đặng Sỹ despite poverty of evidence against him.

Đặng Sỹ was ultimately convicted of the alleged charges and sentenced to life imprisonment and hard labor, paying back some 1.5 million piastre of restitution demanded by the family of the victims.<sup>80</sup> The ruling on Đặng Sỹ differed from what was expected. Indeed, per *Chính Luận*, virtually every journalist predicted that Đặng Sỹ would be given the death sentence due to its political significance.<sup>81</sup> This fact resulted from a number of factors. For one, despite the political significance of the event, Thích Trí Quang had called for clemency for Đặng Sỹ citing the “compassion of the Buddha.”<sup>82</sup> For another, the fact that Đặng Sỹ was not given the death sentence was perhaps due to the emerging Catholic political bloc that condemned the trials of Đặng Sỹ as well as the premise of the Revolutionary Court. Thích Trí Quang’s statement following the Đặng Sỹ ruling was most likely to cater to the growing Catholic militancy and came just days after enormous Catholic protests which erupted not only in Saigon, but also in adjacent provinces. The administration seemingly did the same.

While Buddhists saw the execution of Ngô Đình Cần and Phan Quang Đông in May of 1964 as retribution for the crimes of the Diệm administration, the executions became the impetus that inaugurated expansive Catholic political mobilization. This mobilization responded to the particular experience that Catholic had following the November Revolution. Catholics—particularly those who migrated from the North during the Geneva ceasefire—were once the privileged caste under the “old” regime. Many of these individuals had found themselves in high-ranking positions under Diệm, and, for much of the First Republic, it was upon Catholic anticommunist support that Ngô Đình Diệm reigned.

Early efforts by Buddhist leaders did much to squelch early calls for “retribution” which implicitly targeted Catholic communities. However, the peace between Buddhists and Catholics in 1964 were tenuous at best. Amidst fervent popular demand for political retribution and the growing power of Buddhism, just two weeks after the celebration of Vesak Holiday, tens of thousands of Catholics marched down Nguyễn Huệ singing “Mother Mary, deliver us from these times of danger.”<sup>83</sup> The Catholics followed the same route as that of the Buddhists, and, as *Chính Luận* noted, took over areas where, “a year before[,] bonzes had sat in hunger strike protesting the authoritarian regime of Ngô Đình Diệm.”<sup>84</sup> The Catholic protestors decried what they saw was systematic religious discrimination since the November Revolution. In addition, protestors demanded “true democracy,” a stronger anticommunist effort, and opposition to the “demagogic policy” of the Revolutionary Court.<sup>85</sup> According to Fr. Hoàng Huỳnh—the emerging leader of Catholic militancy—a number of “trend-seekers had exploited the position of the Buddhists to

<sup>79</sup> “Hoài Niệm của Thượng Tòa Trí Quang,” and Nguyên Tâm, “Đài Phát Thanh Huế và Ngày Giỗ Đầu của các em,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 6 (Apr. 25, 1964), 2-3).

<sup>80</sup> “Sau 5 ngày xét xử tòa tuyên án: Đặng Sỹ: Chung Thân Khô Sai,” *Tự Do*, June 9-10, 1964; “Họp lần thứ tư: Tòa Án Cách mạng xử tiếp các vụ giết người, bắt người,” *Chính Luận*, June 9, 1964.

<sup>81</sup> But this would be commuted by Dương Văn Minh (“Phiên tòa thứ 5-6-7 xử vụ tàn sát đê Phật Đản: Nhân chứng chót: Bùi V Lương nguyên Bộ trưởng Nội vụ chế độ Ngô Đình Diệm,” *Chính Luận*, June 8, 1964).

<sup>82</sup> “Thư ngỏ của thượng tọa trí quan về vụ án Ông Đặng Sĩ,” *Lập Trường*, May 16, 1964.

<sup>83</sup> “Dưới Bầu Trời U Âm, 80.000 tín đồ Công Giáo Đứng Ca: Mẹ Ôi! Đưa VN Qua Phút Nguy nan,” *Tự Do*, June 9, 1964.

<sup>84</sup> “Biểu Tình từ Gia Kiệm, Biên Hòa về và mít tinh lớn tại thủ đô,” *Chính Luận*, June 9, 1964.

<sup>85</sup> “Giới công giáo VN sống những giờ phút sôi động,” *Tự Do*, May 23, 1964.

garner personal benefit” in spreading rumors and attacking Catholics, “just as [opportunists] had exploited the Catholics before.”<sup>86</sup>

This massive demonstration was a culmination of weeks of organization and discussion surrounding religious unrest and discriminatory targeting of Catholics in the Central region. Meetings in late January by Vietnamese bishops had begun to reorganize the Church in accordance to the spirit of the Second Vatican.<sup>87</sup> According to the Vietnamese Bishops, “the Catholics are not a ‘class’ of people who exist outside of society....[but are] Vietnamese people living alongside other Vietnamese.” The statement encouraged Catholic participation in national affairs, particularly building “unity in the great national family” and opposition to communism.<sup>88</sup> In April, these meetings resulted in replacing Latin with Vietnamese in masses, prayer, and processions. Moreover, as the Second Vatican sought a broader conversation with the contemporary world, Vietnamese bishops began emphasizing religious education for its lay congregation, integrating the congregation into the determinations of the Church, and sought to ensure the presence of theological teachings in everyday, secular life.<sup>89</sup> These developments seemingly had a mobilizing impact on the Catholic community.

Indeed, the push for protests came primarily from lay congregation and politically-minded priests. Protests originally scheduled for the last week of May never manifested as the Archbishop of Saigon—Nguyễn Văn Bình—issued a communique on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May warning priests that members of the congregation were planning for “meetings or protests” and encouraged priests to ward off these activities during the Vesak holiday. According to the Archbishop, such actions would “unwittingly create the impression that Catholics aspire to disrupt the celebration of our Buddhist compatriots.”<sup>90</sup> Pushed by lay members of his congregation, protests were finally authorized three days later in another communique by the Archbishop who declared that Catholics, as citizens, “had the freedom to express their ideals according to whatever form they desired.”<sup>91</sup> Demonstrations during the Vesak, however, should still be avoided. As the Đặng Sỹ trials closed, Catholics took it to the streets to oppose the ruling, condemning the Court as violating the International Declaration of Human Rights and demanded that Đặng Sỹ be tried by civilian judges.<sup>92</sup> Throughout June, Catholic protests continued and spread to Central Vietnam and the Mekong Delta in the deep south expressing cries for democracy, opposition to religious discrimination and calling for the release of those who were “unfairly imprisoned.”<sup>93</sup>

In many ways, Catholic mobilization shifted the political landscape in the South. Threats of Catholic protest pushed back the trials of Đặng Sỹ until after the Buddha’s Birthday celebration. Đặng Sỹ was ultimately sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labor, a ruling which sparked continuous Catholic protests as well as adamant opposition from hundreds of

<sup>86</sup> “Chung quanh việc coogn giáo dư đình biểu tình,” *Tự Do*, June 2, 1964.

<sup>87</sup> “Đại Hội các vị Giám Mục Công Giáo VN,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 21, 1964.

<sup>88</sup> “Một nước chia rẽ, tự phân tức là đi tới chỗ diệt vong,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 6, 1964.

<sup>89</sup> “Thông cáo của Hội Đồng Giám Mục Việt Nam: Dùng Tiếng Việt trong thánh lễ,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 29, 1964.

<sup>90</sup> “Thông Cáo Tông Giám Mục Sài Gòn Kính gửi các Linh Mục,” *Xây Dựng*, May 25, 1964.

<sup>91</sup> “Tòa Tổng Giám Mục Thông Cáo Giáo Dân có quyền tổ chức biểu tình,” *Xây Dựng*, May 27, 1964.

<sup>92</sup> “Một Nhóm luật gia yêu cầu chánh phủ triệt để tôn trọng bản tuyên ngôn nhân quyền của LHQ,” *Xây Dựng*, June 3, 1964.

<sup>93</sup> “Hôm Chủ Nhật 14-6, Đồng Bào Gia Tô Giáo Biểu Bình, Mít Tinh,” *Chính Luận*, June 17, 1964; “Đồng Bào Công Giáo Cái Sắn Biểu Tình và Mít Tinh,” *Chính Luận*, July 1, 1964.

Catholic leader and priests condemning what they saw as an “unjust ruling.”<sup>94</sup> By the end of June, the Revolutionary Court was closed down.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, these successes emboldened Catholic mobilization and political activism and by the end of 1964, the Catholics had become a political force that rivaled Buddhist influence.<sup>96</sup> However, beyond reshaping the political arena of the Interregnum, the Catholics also provided an alternative vision of “revolution.”

The mobilization of Catholics built around the *Đặng Sỹ* trials highlighted the crux of the Catholic’s position on the issue of “revolution.” Rather than ascribing the division of “old” and “new” which was ideological dominant following the November Revolution, Catholics pointed to the contradictions of such a division. This was particularly true for the label “vestiges of the *Cần Lao Party*” which had emerged since the November Revolution. On this point, Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh argued that “amongst of *Cần Lao Party* members of yesterday, if there are bad elements working against the common good, this is only an individual matter.” Indeed, universally categorizing everyone belonging to the *Cần Lao Party* or the former administration as reactionary elements would mean placing “generals like Nguyễn Khánh, Trần Thiện Khiêm and *Đỗ Mậu* [all of whom] are entities which greatly contributed to the Revolution” into that category.<sup>97</sup> For Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh, these labels and categorizations were arbitrary and did not capture the political intent of the November Revolution which should had been to punish the criminals of the former administration. Rather, the labels had been indiscriminately applied to attack everyone who had worked under the former regime. According to the priest, “Our intent... is to eliminate the inferiority complex that derives of the term ‘old’ because the campaign to criticize ‘old people’ relies on the basis that everyone who had served under the old regime are bad, that this must be eliminated from its roots, that they must be excised from all administrative organs.”<sup>98</sup> The priest goes further to allege that the label of “vestiges of the *Cần Lao Party*” was a communist scheme to divide the anticommunists of the Republic and attack Catholics. According to Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh, it was the very people within the former *Cần Lao Party* who had committed atrocities who are now most adamantly calling for retribution against the “vestiges.”<sup>99</sup>

This adamance against the political-philosophical foundation of the dominant “revolutionary” narrative, however, did not mean that Catholics oppose other demands that emerged following the November Revolution. Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh once argued, only two forces are worthy of national leadership: the military and nationalist parties. The former had to ensure that the people were listened to, while the latter had to become publicly active before they could hold any power. Religious groups, “because of their nature and their holy mission cannot step

<sup>94</sup> “Trên Ba Trăm Linh Mục Phán Đối Tòa CM,” *Chính Luận*, June 30, 1964.

<sup>95</sup> “Tòa Án Cách Mạng Chặt Dứt Thời Hạn Hoạt Động,” *Xây Dựng*, June 27, 1964.

<sup>96</sup> This was clearly recognized by the Khánh administration which sought to ensure Catholics had a political voice in national affairs. For example, in the planning for an enormous rally in commemoration of the “Day of National Resentment” scheduled for the 20<sup>th</sup> of July—the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Geneva Accords signings—Catholics were originally reserved only 50,000 seats in comparison to the 70,000 for Buddhists. However, after reviewing these numbers, the Information Ministry revised the reservation count to 100,000 each—thus, symbolically, affording both religions equal representation in the national body

<sup>97</sup> “Phá hoại tình đoàn kết Quốc Gia: Mục Tiêu duy nhất của chiêu bài ‘đư đảng CL,’” *Xây Dựng*, July 8, 1964.

<sup>98</sup> “Chiến dịch tung chiêu bài ‘đư đảng cần lao’ nhằm,” *Xây Dựng*, July 7, 1964.

<sup>99</sup> “Chiêu Bài ‘đư đảng CL’ nhằm phân tán hàng ngũ coogn chức chup mũ khôi công giáo,” *Xây Dựng*, July 9, 1964.

forward to hold secular power.”<sup>100</sup> Indeed, while Catholics were the group that most fervently defended the legitimacy of the military, they also ascribed to demands of civil rule, democratic representation, and pushed for general elections. The issue for the Catholics was when such implementations should take place and timeliness of transition to civil, democratic governance. Indeed, faced with the threat of anticommunist takeover, the Catholics, in large part, issued caution. The Catholics called for the consolidation of anticommunism before the actual transition.<sup>101</sup> “Revolution,” for the Catholics, cannot mean the total erasure of the Republican past. Of the things that must be retained was anticommunism as the fundamental “political standpoint domestically as well as diplomatically.”<sup>102</sup> While the November Revolution was necessary, it must not be exploited, and the revolutionary state must develop clear policies to guide and enact the revolution. Revolution, ultimately, must be managed.<sup>103</sup>

The Revolution, one editorial in *Xây Dựng* argued, must be a merger of both the demands of Freedom and Democracy championed by the Buddhists as well as the demand for anticommunism championed by the Catholics.<sup>104</sup> That “democracy,” however, must be tailored to the conditions of war—that is to build a unifying set of ideals and program of action around which the entire population of the South can support and be mobilized around.<sup>105</sup> The vision of “revolution” that the Catholics pushed for was not “war” or “democracy,” but rather a combination of both. It cannot be one or the other.<sup>106</sup> However, Catholics and Buddhists clearly differed on which should be prioritized. As the Interregnum years wear on, the question of balance between these two matters would be the crux of political contestation and debates. The matter of “war” or “democracy” paralleled the matter of “retribution” against criminals of the old regime. While militant members of the UBC called for holistic retribution against the former regime, militant Catholics pushed for caution and aptness in such retribution. Both sides ascribed the language and significance of the November Revolution, but differed on what that Revolution promised and necessarily entailed. The militancy of the Buddhists and the militancy of the Catholics would mark the polarity of radicalism and conservatism in South Vietnamese politics.

### *Youth and Student Activism*

In discussing the collapse of the Khánh administration in August of 1964, the Buddhists and the Catholics—the two politically-charged religious forces that eventually fought each other

<sup>100</sup> “Nhân dân lúc này đòi một chính quyền mạnh, hữu hiệu, nhất trí có khả năng đẩy lui Việt Cộng, lập lại kỷ cương,” *Xây Dựng*, July 10, 1964

<sup>101</sup> Nghiêm Thủy Thạch, “Góp ý kiến vấn đề cứu quốc kiến quốc,” *Xây Dựng*, June 12-13, 1964; “Nhân dân lúc này đòi một chính quyền mạnh, hữu hiệu, nhất trí có khả năng đẩy lui Việt Cộng, lập lại kỷ cương,” *Xây Dựng*, July 10, 1964; “đã đến lúc có thể thành lập một chính phủ dân sự hay chưa?” *Xây Dựng*, July 10, 1964; “Hoàn cảnh đất nước không cho phép bất cứ ai làm một cuộc thí nghiệm lãnh đạo quốc gia,” *Xây Dựng*, July 11, 1964; Hoàng Hải, “Người dân mong gì ở Quốc Hội lập hiến,” *Xây Dựng*, July 3, 1964; “Chúng tôi phỏng vấn LM HOnagf Quỳnh: Quân Đội phải hoàn thành CM,” *Xây Dựng*, June 25, 1964; “Chúng Tôi đòi hỏi chính quyền một chính sách và những biện pháp chống cộng hữu hiệu,” *Xây Dựng*, June 20, 1964; Nguyễn Tiến Cảnh, “Người Công Dân CG và ý thức chính trị,” *Xây Dựng*, June 17, 1964.

<sup>102</sup> Tường Anh and Lâm Thành Duy, “Chống Cộng thế nào được,” *Xây Dựng*, July 28, 1964.

<sup>103</sup> Hồng Linh, “Thế Nào là quá khích? AI đang gây chia rẽ?” *Xây Dựng*, June 13-14, 1964; “Tuyên Ngôn của Khối Công Giáo Việt Nam,” *Xây Dựng*, June 9-10, 1964.

<sup>104</sup> “Trước hiện tình đất nước, một bạn đọc lên tiếng kêu gọi hạn chế quyền lợi riêng tư,” *Xây Dựng*, Sep. 8, 1964.

<sup>105</sup> Lạc Thu Yên, “Biểu Tình Cho ai?” *Xây Dựng*, July 15-16, 1964.

<sup>106</sup> Nghiêm Thủy Thạch, “Góp ý kiến vấn đề cứu quốc kiến quốc,” *Xây Dựng*, June 12-13, 1964.

in street battles across the urban centers of South Vietnam—clearly took center stage. Often overlooked is the role of the force of youth and student mobilization during the Khánh era which constituted a Republican political component in and of themselves. While influenced by religious leaders, youths and students acted with a degree of autonomy. And it was the students who inaugurated the opposition to the Vũng Tàu Charter, rather than the Buddhists—contrary to other portrayals of the event.<sup>107</sup>

Student activism during the Khánh Era can, ironically, be traced to anticommunist and anti-neutralist mobilization following the Day of National Resentment—a commemorative holiday initiated by the Khánh regime to remember the “10-years of communist atrocities” *mười năm tội ác Việt Cộng* which began with signing of the Geneva Accords. Largely state orchestrated, the week leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1964 involved state-funded public events stoking the “resentment” *uất hận* of the Geneva Accords including speeches by high-ranking generals, state-mandated “study sessions,” a gallery depicting communist crimes, and orchestrated mass rallies. While the focus of these commemorations was directed at “communist atrocities,” these events also ideologically pushed for a “Northward March” *Bắc Tiến*.<sup>108</sup> The concept of the “Northward March”—which entailed a vague notion of bringing the war to the North—was not one that derived from the Khánh administration but was rather a rumored possibility discussed in the South Vietnamese press following the McNamara visit in March of 1964. Indeed, in the press, the “Northward March” was conceptualized as anywhere from American aerial bombardment of North Vietnam to a South Vietnamese ground invasion initiated by South Vietnamese commandos parachuted into territories above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>107</sup> See Topmiller, 17-19; In his authoritative, but non-academic, book, librarian Lâm Vĩnh Thế—who was an instructor during the period—accurately differentiated between the “Buddhist Factor” and “Factor Youth and Students.” He, however, never discussed the role of the Catholics during the event. Nor did he discussed the role of the press, which had become a political “factor” of its own.

<sup>108</sup> Recall that from 1954 to 1958, the Diem Administration had utilized the Geneva Accords as an ideological tool to articulate South Vietnamese grievances against communism. In 1964, the fundamentals of the narrative on the Geneva Accords were reutilized by the Khánh administration: colonialists and communists were condemned for dividing Vietnam, the historical opposition of South Vietnam to the Geneva signings, and the communist exploitation of the provisions in the Accords to resume war. Organization, study documents, speeches from government officials and planning for 1964 Day of National Resentment, see *Tài Liệu Học Tập của Sở Túc Mễ Nhân Ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, NCN, Fold. 855; *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế v/v học tập đề tài "Ngày Quốc Hận", "Cách mạng 01/11/1963" năm 1964*, TQT, Fold. 3585; *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức các hoạt động Meeting triển lãm học tập kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, BCCGT, Fold. 1773. Distributed during the 1964 commemoration was a thick booklet entitled *Communist Aggression against the Republic of Vietnam*, Republic of Vietnam (July 1964). The first 181 pages of the book provide details on specific event of “communist atrocities” ranging from terrorist acts to violation of the Geneva Accords that the North had signed. The last 17 pages are images of “evidence” including captured weapons from communist guerrillas pointing to the support of the Soviet Union for the insurgency and pictures of mutilation, death, and destruction caused by guerrilla forces.

<sup>109</sup> “Sắp có về việt nam: những quyết định ghê gớm như đề đổi phó với vụ CUBA,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 3, 1964; “Thủ Tướng Nguyễn Khánh cho biết: Có nên tấn công ra bắc không?” *Tự Do*, Mar. 7, 1964; “Đề phòng quân đội miền nam Bắc tiến, VC Bộ Phòng các miền duyên hải,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 16, 1964; “Nguyên tắc ‘đánh bắc’ đã được chấp thuận,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 19, 1964; “Trả lời cuộc phỏng vấn của Tự Do, TT Nguyễn Khánh tuyên bố: Không có tổng động viên,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 20, 1964; Thái Minh, “Bắc Tiến để thống nhất VN: Tại sao không làm thật mạnh nghãi là đánh đảng hoàng, đnahs đầu chiếm đó?” *Tự Do*, Mar. 23, 1964; “Đề phòng miền Nam Bắc Tiến VC Đào Hàm chông xăng và đạn dược,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 30, 1964; “Một việt kiều tại Tân Gia Ba tình nguyện Bắc Tiến,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 9, 1964; “Huấn luyện phi công VN để bay ra Bắc,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 16, 1964; “Ngoại trưởng Dean Rusk tại Hội Nghị liên phòng: Mỹ sẽ đẩy chiến tranh lên Bắc Việt,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 16, 1964; “Thêm lý do vững mạnh để đánh ra Bắc,” *Tự Do*, May 22, 1964; “Bác sĩ

Seizing this ideological novelty, the “Northward March” was utilized to by the regime to unify the discordant political components in the Republic—a discord that was growing increasingly problematic—around an anticommunist drive centered on grievances of “communist atrocities” and the possibility of military retribution.<sup>110</sup>

However, in the aftermath of that initial “week of National Resentment,” the ideological control that the state had over the idea largely disintegrated. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, commemorative rallies, speeches, activities were attended by some 1 million South Vietnamese in the capitol. This upsurge in anticommunist sentiments quickly spiral beyond what was intended by the regime. Throughout the remainder of July, students waged continuous demonstrations denouncing De Gaulle, France, and neutralism while calling for democratic institutions and immediate measures to inaugurate the “Northward March.” Students paraded effigies of De Gaulle and Ho Chi Minh throughout the streets of Saigon on the 19<sup>th</sup>, vandalized a French memorial honoring the France’s dead and on the night of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and raided the French Embassy in the city, toppling a station wagon on embassy grounds and setting it on fire in protest against De Gaulle and French neutralist policies.<sup>111</sup> On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, students rallied in the capitol demanding the nationalization of French property and on the 28<sup>th</sup>, students again attacked the vandalized French monuments to finally topple and dispose of the statues.<sup>112</sup> Student agitation seemingly did not simmer off until the Ministry of the Interior declared that unauthorized protests and demonstrations were banned and explicitly called upon them to “remain calm” and whose activities were “creating more difficulties for the government.”<sup>113</sup>

Khánh’s relationship with American diplomatic officials actually deteriorated during this period—primarily due to his support of this “Northward March.”<sup>114</sup> Much to American displeasure, Khánh remained quite adamant on his position of the “Northward March” despite direct concerns raised by Maxwell Taylor—the American ambassador to South Vietnam. American officials, on their part, viewed student protests and Khánh adamancy on the Northward March as a “determined campaign to ‘embarrass’ and perhaps even to ‘blackmail’ Washington”

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Quát Tuyên bố tại Nữ Ước nếu sự sống còn bị đe dọa, VN sẽ đánh ra Bắc,” *Tự Do*, May 28, 1964; “Chuẩn tướng tư lệnh không quân VN xác nhận: Biệt kích miền Nam phá cầu Hạ Lý,” *Tự Do*, July 24, 1964.

<sup>110</sup> “Ý Chí,” *Tự Do*, July 20, 1964; “Đoàn quân Bắc Tiến SV tiếp tục ghi tên,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964; “Việc phá hoại miền Bắc: Miền Nam sẽ giúp cho các nhóm chiến sĩ tấn gia cuộc phá hoại ở Bắc Việt,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964.

<sup>111</sup> “Anti-French Rally in Saigon,” *The Times of India*, July 20, 1964; “Vietnamese Raid French War Statue: Damage Monument in Marking ‘National Day of Shame’” *The Sun*, July 20, 1964; “Đốt phá tòa Đại Sứ Pháp,” *Tự Do*, July 22, 1964;

<sup>112</sup> Much to the pleasure of the protesting students, the French memorial statue was eventually removed and was replaced with one honoring Vietnamese victory. It is reported that a statue of “Thần Chiến Thắng” or the wing statue of Nike of Samothrace was installed, as well as a removal of all French names from placards in the square (“Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Việt Nam Yêu cầu Chính Phủ: Quốc Hũ HỎA TÀI SẢN PHÁP và đoạn giao với chính phủ De Gaulle,” *Tự Do*, July 24, 1964; “Anh Em sinh viên đã hạ hăng tượng đồng Pháp tại công trường Chiến Sĩ,” *Tự Do*, July 30, 1964). Students also convened meetings and discussions to review the legacy of French colonialism in Vietnam and condemned French colonialist policies of “ngu dân” (making the populace stupid) and “Chia Đẻ Trị” (Divide and Conquer) (Sinh Viên Saigon Thảo Luận ‘chánh sách thực dân Pháp tại Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 4, 1964).

<sup>113</sup> “Thông Cáo của Bộ Nội Vụ kêu gọi sinh viên,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 3, 1964; Final student demonstration calling for the Northward March came on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, just 1 day before the enactment of the State of Emergency. Students threatened a 5 day hunger strike (“50 học sinh, sinh viên ngồi trước trụ sở tổng hội sinh viên biểu tình tuyệt thực năm ngày liền đòi Chính Phủ Cách mạng thật sự,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 8, 1964.

<sup>114</sup> “Việt Nam tự dành quyền tấn công Bắc Việt, dù Mỹ không muốn,” *Tự Do*, July 30, 1964.

into expanding American war contribution or taking measures to move the war north.<sup>115</sup> However, ongoing American pressure for South Vietnamese officials to reverse their stance led Khánh to moderate his position on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August.<sup>116</sup>

Before civil political forces in the South had time to fully respond to Khánh's change of stance, a series of events unfolded which significantly altered the political fabric of the South.<sup>117</sup> It must be understood that, until August, the Khánh administration had demonstrated "goodwill" *thiện chí* in establishing certain prerequisites for democratic participation in South Vietnam. The administration had encouraged nationalist parties to be politically active, aided the growth of the Unified Buddhist Church, and even politically negotiated with the demands of Catholics. Protests and demonstrations largely went unhindered and criticisms of government policies—and even national leaders—were, for the most part, uncensored in the press. Plans for national elections, a constituent assembly and transition to civil were underway. In many ways, the period was the high point democratization in South Vietnam.

The events that unfolded in August, however, was the complete reversal of these trends. The Gulf of Tonkin incident, long argued in the Vietnam War literature as *the* event that initiated American involvement in Vietnam, was, for South Vietnam, *the* event that reversed these relatively stable democratic developments and spiraled the country into some 5 months of perpetual chaos. The issue, however, had less to do with American response to the attack on the USS Maddox than it did with how Khánh exploited the heightened military conditions to impose, first, a State of Emergency, and, then, the Vũng Tàu Charter which gave himself dictatorial powers.

### *The collapse of the Khánh Administration*

After the two attacks by North Vietnamese gunboats on US vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, US President Johnson called for retaliatory bombing of North Vietnam. For the Khánh administration, the American bombing raids on North Vietnam led to the possibility of retaliation by North Vietnamese and Chinese forces. To cope with this possibility, Khánh declared a State of Emergency on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August which gave him unilateral powers to take all measures deemed necessary to protect national security. Press censorship was enacted, all demonstrations and protests were banned, a curfew would be in effect from 11pm to 4am, food distribution would be controlled, and the army was authorized to search private homes at any hour. In that speech, Khanh laid out the "realities" of the war. According to the General-Premier, the situation in South Vietnam was dire as some 150,000 guerrillas threatened the Republic and 20% of the South Vietnamese population was under communist control. Khanh warned his citizens that South Vietnam "may be invaded or attacked at any time" and called upon "patriotic" North

<sup>115</sup> "Taylor Sees Khanh as Differences on Viet Strategy Grow," *Boston Globe*, July 24, 1964; "Demands Puddle US: Saigon Demands Puzzles US Aides," *New York Times*, July 24, 1964; "LBJ Deflates Viet Threat to Go North," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, July 25, 1964; "New Strains in Vietnam," *New York Times*, July 26, 1964.

<sup>116</sup> "Khanh Comments on policy," *New York Times*, Aug. 2, 1964; "Trung Tướng Nguyễn Khánh Giải Thích: Bắc Tiến Lúc này không phải là đem quân đánh Bắc mà chỉ có nghĩa là chống sự giết chóc của VC," *Tự Do*, Mar. 8, 1964.

<sup>117</sup> The final student demonstration calling for a "real Northward March" came on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August, just 1 day before the enactment of the State of Emergency. Students also demanded a "real revolutionary government," cessation with relations with France, and condemned the Student Union which had opposed student actions on 7-20. Students threatened a 5-day hunger strike ("Một cuộc biểu tình của học sinh," *Tự Do*, Aug. 7, 1964; "50 học sinh, sinh viên ngồi trước trụ sở tổng hội sinh viên biểu tình tuyệt thực năm ngày liền đòi Chính Phủ Cách mạng thật sự," *Chính Luận*, Aug. 8, 1964).



Vietnamese to “stand up and overthrow the dictatorial party rule” of the communist government.<sup>118</sup>

In the following days, the government began work on some 500 bomb shelters, city coffers opened for a rationing of rice and milk, and plans were in motion to move Saigon residents to the Gia Dinh Province as the capitol prepares for possible air raids.<sup>119</sup> Reports came in that regiments of North Vietnamese troops were being deployed across the river Ben Hai awaiting command to cross the river and invade the South, some 70 Chinese MIGs were on their way to Ha Noi and China mobilized some 200,000 troops to be stationed at southern-most Chinese provinces.<sup>120</sup> South Vietnamese artillery and tanks were repositioned just a few thousand yards from the border.<sup>121</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Zone was placed under a full State of Emergency in preparation for a possible ground counter-offensive.<sup>122</sup> Chinese jet fighters were confirmed in North Vietnam and American vessels were ordered to “pursue, attack, and destroy” any Chinese unit that commits a “hostile act” against Americans in international waters.<sup>123</sup>

In general, these measures undertaken by the Khánh administration faced little resistance from civil society—with some enthusiastically supporting them.<sup>124</sup> What turned popular opinion against Khánh was the Vũng Tàu Charter which became publicized on the 16<sup>th</sup> of August as Khánh is sworn in as “Chairman” of the republic. The crucial issue with the Vũng Tàu Charter was that, under a State of Emergency, it singularizes military, legislative and judicial powers within a single individual. The Chairman of the Republic is given powers to declare war, negotiates treaties, command the Armed forces, and can unilaterally “pardon, reduce, change or suspend sentences.” The Chairman had the power to declare laws and regulations, suspend civil liberties, and can “enact all resolutions [and] all appropriate measures.” As many of these actions must be approved by the RMC—a condition, according to some journalist, was a “setback” for

<sup>118</sup> “Lời Hiệu Triệu của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch HQĐCM Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 7, 1964; “Sài Gòn Sôi Nổi Phóng viên ngoại quốc đổ ra Đà Nẵng,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 7, 1964; “Báo động khắp Á Đông,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 7, 1964; “Thủ Tướng Khánh cho biết: Lực Lượng VC Tại miền Nam VN,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 10, 1964; “Các biện pháp khẩn trương,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 10, 1964; “Kiểm duyệt tin tức, báo chí,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 10, 1964; “Thủ Tướng Khánh Tuyên Bố tại Bến Hải: 90% VNCH không thể bị oanh tạc,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 10, 1964; “South Vietnam Premier Proclaims Martial Law,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 8, 1964.

<sup>119</sup> “Giải tỏa 100.000 Thùng sửa đặc,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 11, 1964; “Saigon Không lo thiếu gạo,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 10, 1964; “Thủ Đô đào 500 hầm trú ẩn công cộng cho 400.000 người,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 12, 1964; “Nếu Saigon bị TC ném bom, dân chugns tản cư bót vào Gia Định,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 14, 1964.

<sup>120</sup> “Trung cộng chuyển 200000 quân 70 phân lực cơ MIG và 6 tiêm thủy định đến gần duyên hải Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 9, 1964; “Saigon Decrees Emergency Rule,” *New York Times*, Aug. 8, 1964; “Trugn Cộng tập trận lớn ở Phước Kiến và Quảng Đông,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 16, 1964.

<sup>121</sup> “Khanh Told Reds Mass Across S. Viet Border,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 9, 1964; “Khanh Visits Border, Told of Red Buildup,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 9, 1964.

<sup>122</sup> “Đề phòng VC tràn qua Bến Hải, Huế Đặt trong tình trạng báo động,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 9, 1964;

<sup>123</sup> “US Navy Ordered to Destroy Any Attacking Chinese Unites,” *New York Times*, Aug. 11, 1964; “Chiến hạm VN Hành Quân chống shair thuyền VC trên vĩ tuyến 17,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 9, 1964;

<sup>124</sup> A number of newspapers, like *Tự Do*, praised American retaliatory bombing as the “beginning chapter of the Northward March campaign.” *Chính Luận*, in its own opinion column, called for national unity and the end of political discord to combat the evident communist threat. Political organizations, like the People’s Front for Self Determination, volunteered themselves for active duty in Civil Defense units (“Gia nhập hệ thống Phòng Vệ Dân Sự,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 14, 1964). As American bombers retaliated against North Vietnam, Saigonese stayed up from the 6-8<sup>th</sup> carefully following the events unfolding (Saigon đêm 6-7-8 Dân Chugns sống trong chờ đợi,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 9, 1964). 300 students rallied on the 6<sup>th</sup> demanding a “real northern march” as well as restating their demands to end diplomatic relations with France. “Học Sinh Biểu Tình đòi Bắc Tiến,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 7, 1964.

Khánh<sup>125</sup>—the Charter effectively placed virtually all effective powers within the military. Although a National Legislature was planned, its entire composition would be appointed, selected, or approved by the military and, under a State of Emergency, legislative powers of the body would be vastly curbed.<sup>126</sup>

The irony, however, was that if the country was not in a State of Emergency, the Vũng Tàu Charter was more progressive than the national charter established in November of 1963. Under normal conditions, the Charter provided full guarantees for civil liberties, equal rights, and—at least formally—the separation of powers between judicial, executive, and legislative branches. The death knell for the Charter was Khánh’s declaration that the military would remain in power until the war was over—an indefinite condition which drew criticisms from a wide spectrum within the Republican civil society.<sup>127</sup> Even *Xây Dựng*—the Catholic organ known for regular support of the military—argued against the “centralization of all powers to that the military” and that the Vũng Tàu Charter did not “respond to the yearning aspirations of the people.” The newspaper called for “development of social structures according to a true democratic regime” and that military “victory upon a broken society” was no victory at all.<sup>128</sup>

When asked about the dictatorial nature of the Charter at the August 16<sup>th</sup> press conference, Khánh argued that it was a matter of “individual personality” and, in the last 6 months, although the national structure was effectively authoritarian, his actions were enough to demonstrate that *authoritarianism* was not an issue.<sup>129</sup> Students, however, clearly disagreed. Beginning on the 19<sup>th</sup>, students mobilized continual protests condemning the Charter as undemocratic. For the students, the Charter provided unrestrained power for the Chairman reflected the same Republican constitution of the Diệm administration and that the RMC—the only organ that any control over the Chairman—was made up of only 58 military men and in no way represented the entirety of the nation. Alongside these demands, students called upon the administration to exterminate communist, neutralist, and “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party” who hid within the administration.<sup>130</sup> Despite attempts by Khánh to assuage students’ demands on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, he was handed an ultimatum that if changes were not enacted by the 25<sup>th</sup>, mass protests would erupt in the city.<sup>131</sup>

As students waged their battle against the Charter, their movement merged with an explosion of popular discontent that had been festering in the Buddhist community. Reports had

<sup>125</sup> “Khanh Wins Presidency of Viet Nam,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 17, 1964; “Khanh Now President,” *Boston Globe*, Aug. 17, 1964; “Raise Kahn to President of Vietnam,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 17, 1964.

<sup>126</sup> Full text of the Charter: “Quốc Hội lâm thời được chỉ định,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 18, 1964; English-language: Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 221-236.

<sup>127</sup> “Gen Khanh takes over as President,” *The Guardian*, Aug. 17, 1964; Từ Chung, “Nhận Định về sự ban hành hiến chương mới: Từ độc tài phản động đến độc tài cách mệnh,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 20, 1964; Committee organizing for a Constituent Assembly self-disbanded itself citing that “the Provisional Charter... is a new development causing [this committee] to view that it cannot independently continue its activities,” (“Ủy Ban vận động quốc dân đại hội tự động giải tán,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 21, 1964); “Nhân một lời tuyên bố của ông nguyên khánh,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 18, 1964; “Đề rồi xem sao...” *Tự Do*, Aug. 21, 1964.

<sup>128</sup> “Ý Kiến Chúng Tôi: Phải thành lập một tân chính phủ theo tiêu chuẩn nào,” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 24, 1964.

<sup>129</sup> “Sẽ có nội các chiến tranh,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 18, 1964.

<sup>130</sup> “Khanh to meet student critics of Constitution,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 21, 1964; “Phái đoàn sinh viên yêu cầu: tu chỉnh hiến chương,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 24, 1964; “Quyết nghị của toàn thể Thanh Niên Sinh Viên Học Sinh Saigon có mặt tại buổi thảo luận tọa giảng đường II Đại Học Khoa Học ngày 22-8-1964,” Aug. 24, 1964

<sup>131</sup> “Khanh given ultimatum by students,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 23, 1964.

emerged in early July regarding the “compulsory ‘political studies’” of some “1,300 Buddhists” in the village of Duy Xuyên in Quảng Ngãi Province, Central Vietnam. The news caused a massive uproar in the Buddhist community with Thích Thiện Minh—head of the Secular Institute’s Youth Division—warning that if the issue was not addressed, “there will be a reaction of the Buddhists across the country.”<sup>132</sup> At first denied and suppressed by the Ministry of Information,<sup>133</sup> pressures from Buddhist leaders and groups forced an investigation that eventually resulted in the “moving” of the district head and the village chief—both of whom were Catholic military officers—“to avoid conflict with the periphery.”<sup>134</sup> The administration, ultimately, admitted no wrongdoing. According to the official press release by the Ministry of the Interior on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, the “political study classes” was a “security measure” implemented in the district which were deemed successful in weeding out communist agents. The discontents of the Buddhists are brushed off as resulting from the “lack of calmness on the part of a number people and the failures of a number of administrative personnel who worked too mechanically.”<sup>135</sup> The response taken by the administration on the event was far from satisfactory. The issue for the Buddhist was not the “failures of administrative personnel” or even “compulsory ‘political study’” per se, it was the fact that it was the Buddhists who were targeted, and this persecution was orchestrated by members of the “old” regime. The event sparked Buddhist demands to excise “vestiges” from the administration and rejuvenated allegations that former Cần Lao members were “scheming to enact vengeance on those who toppled the Diem regime, particularly the Buddhists.”<sup>136</sup>

The tense political situation within the Buddhist community was aggravated with the enactment of the Vũng Tàu Charter. The Buddhist leadership, in fact, sent a letter on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August stating that it would support the Khánh administration if the “government truly respect freedom and democracy and stand entirely on the side of the people.”<sup>137</sup> Early in the riots, the issue for the Buddhists was less about “democracy” than it was about “social justice.” On the 18<sup>th</sup> of August, Buddhist leaders had published two communiques condemning the remaining

<sup>132</sup> “Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 20 (Aug. 1, 1964), p. 16.

<sup>133</sup> “Không có việc bắt 1.300 Phật Tử ở Quảng Nam,” *Tự Do*, July 17, 1964; “Chúng Tôi phản đối Nha Thông Tin Báo Chí,” *Tự Do*, July 19, 1964.

<sup>134</sup> Prisoners who were still held within that count of 1,300 would be released on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August. By the end of July, 112 were still undergoing compulsory political study (Đề giải quyết vụ Phật Giáo khiếu nại Thuyền Chuyền Tướng Ngô Du,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 4, 1964). To make matters worse, after being transferred, the District Head, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieu. Phạm Kim Anh, was awarded with a title by his immediate commander Brig. Gen. Ngô Du (“Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 20 (Aug. 1, 1964), p. 16.

<sup>135</sup> “Bộ Nội Vụ Dứt Khoát trả lời dư luận vụ Duy Xuyên,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 10, 1964.

<sup>136</sup> “Bộ Nội Vụ Dứt Khoát trả lời dư luận vụ Duy Xuyên,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 10, 1964; Other grievances listed by the Buddhists include: Assassination of 5 Buddhists in Quảng Nam, arson of 270 houses in Bình Định, vandalization of a temple in Quảng Đức (“Sau Khi Yết Kiên Thủ Tướng, Thượng Tọa Thích Thiện Minh Cho Biết: Phật Giáo Biểu Dương Lực Lượng,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 6, 1964); Other news source on event: “Không bắt người chỉ có người học tập,” *Tự Do*, July 19, 1964; “Vụ 1.300 Phật Tử ở Quảng Nam,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964; “Có thể kết thúc về vụ 1.300 phật tử bị bắt giữ ở quảng nam,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 2, 1964; “Vụ Bắt Phật Tử Duy Xuyên: Sự Thật Thế Nào,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 4, 1964; “Thủ Tướng Tuyên Bố Tại Duy Xuyên: Đùng Biển Vấn Đề An Ninh thành Một Vấn Đề Tôn Giáo,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 11, 1964.

<sup>137</sup> “Thượng tọa Tâm Châu gửi thư cho Chủ tịch Nguyễn Khánh Phật Giáo Chỉ Ủng Hộ nếu Chính Phủ thực sự tôn trọng tự do dân chủ và đứng hẳn về phía đa số dân chúng,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 25, 1964; “Buddhists Mark the Anniversary of 1963 Raids: Vietnamese Leaders Warn,” *New York Times*, Aug 21, 1964; “South Vietnam Buddhists in Revolt Threat,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 24, 1964.

vestiges of the old regime within the South Vietnamese administration, singling out the Duy Xuyên incident. It made no mention of the dictatorial powers vested in the Vũng Tàu Charter.<sup>138</sup> However, as student protests waged on, Buddhist leaders shifted their stance in public support of student demands. This shift, partly, was due to the poorly-timed publicization of the Charter which came just 4 days before the anniversary of the raids on Buddhist Pagodas conducted under Ngô Đình Nhu last fall. At the same time last year, Vietnam was also under a State of Emergency. Power was vested upon one man who ruled dictatorially and ultimately suppressed the Buddhists to the point that its leaders had to vacate the country.<sup>139</sup> The boiling resentment against the Khánh administration and its inability to enact “revolutionary” measures against “vestiges” of the old regime magnified as Khánh declared the State of Emergency and instituted the Vũng Tàu Charter. Furthermore, particularly in the Central Regions, student opposition to the Vũng Tàu Charter had merged with Buddhist discontents. Indeed, while student protests in the Capitol was largely focused on anti-authoritarianism and false reporting of student demands,<sup>140</sup> in Đà Nẵng, Huế, and Qui Nhon, anti-government protests were conjoined with attacks against Catholic communities and American installations.<sup>141</sup>

On the 24<sup>th</sup>, the Unified Buddhist Church officially recognized the demands of the students. In a joint statement signed by Buddhist leaders Thích Tâm Châu and Thích Trí Quang, the demand for “social justice” was joined with demands to scrap the Vũng Tàu Charter. The statement also laid out measures to form a “provisional government that is characterized by revolution, unity, and capability” as well as general elections, a constitutional assembly, a new censorship body governed by journalists, and the complete removal of all vestiges of the Can

<sup>138</sup> “Viet Buddhists Angry with Regime,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 19, 1964; Phan Nghi “Kỷ niệm ngày ‘tử ngô diệt phật’ tàn bạo như ‘tam vũ bài tăng’ giáo hội phật giáo tuyên bố: phật giáo chưa chấm dứt vận động bảo vệ chánh pháp và công bình xã hội,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 21, 1964; “KHANH ACTS TO STABILIZE SAIGON REGIME,” *New York Times*, Aug 23, 1964

<sup>139</sup> The irony was not lost on the students. Students met on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and discussed the significance of the November Revolution and the dictatorial nature of a military government—particularly when this government “holds complete power over the army as well as the administration” (“Sinh viên phá đài phát thanh thiệt hại 1 triệu đồng,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 25, 1964).

<sup>140</sup> Student protests in the capitol sacked a national radio station on the 23<sup>rd</sup> denouncing what they believed were the “distorted contents” of the press releases following their meeting with Nguyễn Khánh. That same day another crowd of students marched to the Pharmacy School at Saigon University and set fire to copy of the Charter. A 53-year-old man immolated himself in protest of the Khanh’s government. On the 24<sup>th</sup>, students sacked the Ministry of Information, and when the Student Union in Saigon condemned these activities, its headquarters were destroyed in student riots (“Students Burn Charter Copy,” *New York Times*, Aug 23, 1964; “SAIGON STUDENTS RAID RADIO STUDIO OVER GRIEVANCES,” *New York Times*, Aug 24, 1964; “Mob of Angry Vietnamese Students Smashes Government Radio Station,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 24, 1964; “SAIGON STUDENTS RAID RADIO STUDIO OVER GRIEVANCES,” *New York Times*, Aug 24, 1964).

<sup>141</sup> In Central Vietnam—the hub of Buddhist discontent—protests took on anti-Catholic, anti-government, and anti-American characteristics. In Đà Nẵng students hurled stones at a US Army shouting anti-government and anti-American slogans. A Catholic Hamlet on the outskirts of Đà Nẵng was burned to ashes. In Huế, a Catholic High School was attacked. In Qui Nhon, clashes between Catholics and Buddhists placed the city under martial law (“Vietnam Students Mob U.S. Billet: Rocks Hurlled Through Windows,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 24, 1964; “KHANH RESIGNS AS PRESIDENT OF VIET: ACT FOLLOWS 6 DAYS OF STUDENT RIOTING CALLING FOR OUSTER,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 25, 1964; “Four Hospital Patients Killed by Viet Rioters,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 27, 1964; “U.S. Keeps Close Tab on Khanh in Viet Crisis: State Dept. Optimistic,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 27, 1964).

Lao Party from any position of power. The Buddhist Church declared that it would “support any government that can actualize [these] aspirations of the Buddhists and the people.”<sup>142</sup>

As the Buddhists and the students formed a coalition, other segments of the Republican civil society also joined the fray. Nationalist parties—originally completely silent on the Charter<sup>143</sup>—came out adamantly against Khánh as well. Like the students and the Buddhists, the newly formed “United Nationalist Force”—a political front formed back in July which composed of some 15 religious and nationalist parties—decried the Khánh administration of betraying its promise to excise Cần Lao members and enact democracy. According to Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn—the Deputy Prime Minister of Pacification and leader of the United Nationalist Force—the Nguyễn Khánh had progressively moved towards authoritarianism.<sup>144</sup>

Acting on their ultimatum to Khanh, on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>, some 30,000 protestors marched to the Chairman’s office at No. 7 Thống Nhất Street demanding the scrapping of the Charter. Along with this demand, the student-led protest called for military officers to return to their military duties, excising former Can Lao members and corrupted elements in the administration and demanded civil leadership of the Republican government. Later that day, Khanh announced his resignation from the office of Chairman and promised that the RMC would vote for a new Head of State for South Vietnam in preparation for general elections and then the RMC would voluntarily disband. As the generals of the RMC met, 3 days of bloodshed, violence, and protests continued throughout the country. By the time triumvirate administration was announced on the 27<sup>th</sup>—composed of equal power between Nguyễn Khánh, Dương Văn Minh, and Trần Thiện Khiêm—12 laid dead from the violence in the capitol streets.<sup>145</sup>

While support was given to the student’s and Buddhist demands from numerous components of the Republican civil society, the Catholics stood in direct confrontation to student demands. Early on, a letter was sent on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August to Khanh by the Archbishop of Saigon congratulating the new Chairman on his position.<sup>146</sup> This set a precedent. When Khanh

<sup>142</sup> “Tuyên Ngôn của Viện Tăng Thống và Viện Hóa Đạo Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 27, 1964.

<sup>143</sup> Reactions from political parties were originally tepid. A student protest on the 23<sup>rd</sup> had handed out a pamphlet demanding political parties to join the students’ cause. According the pamphlet, since the November Revolution, political parties had been appearing nonstop in a “chaotic competition for influence.” However, now, “Students pioneers the opposition to authoritarianism, fighting for the nation and people.” These political parties, on the other, “return to their state of silence and inaction.” The students called upon those “leaders of the revolution,” those “revolutionary politicians” to also raise their voices, or will the “give up an opportunity of a lifetime to remove these negative appraisals of their legitimacy?” (“Các Đảng Phái Nghĩ Sao?” *Tự Do*, Aug. 25, 1964.

<sup>144</sup> The Social Democrats called for an end of the State of Emergency, a complete removal of article 3 in the Charter which grants the Chairman dictatorial powers and inaugurate a “people’s conference...[to] completely review the [present] situation and find suitable resolution.” The VNQDD joined these voices to end the State of Emergency and scrap the Vung Tau Charter in its entirety. They also called for a provisional charter and general elections for the formation of a National Assembly (“Các đảng phái quốc gia đòi chấm dứt ‘tình trạng khẩn trương và hủy bỏ hiến chương Vũng Tàu, Triệu tập Quốc dân đại hội,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 26, 1964).

<sup>145</sup> “KHANH RESIGNS AS PRESIDENT OF VIET: ACT FOLLOWS 6 DAYS OF STUDENT RIOTING CALLING FOR OUSTER,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 25, 1964; “HQĐCM Đã Quyết Định: Thâu Hồi Hiến Chương Vũng Tàu,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 27, 1964; “Gen. Khanh in new Vietnam triumvirate: Day of fighting in Saigon streets,” *The Guardian*, Aug 28, 1964; ; “Catholic, Buddhist Mobs War in Saigon,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 28, 1964; “Ceremonial murder in Saigon riots,” *The Guardian*, Aug 29, 1964; “Administration Is Gloomy Over Outlook for Vietnam,” *New York Times*, Aug 28, 1964

<sup>146</sup> “Đức Tổng Giám Mục Saigon và Quân Dân các tỉnh gửi thư mừng Tân Chủ Tịch,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 21, 1964.

announced his resignation from the post of Chairman, Catholic protest erupted in the capitol calling for the status quo. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, while the RMC met to elect a new Chairman following Khanh's resignation, 3000 Catholic demonstrators stormed to the Office of the Chairman in support of the RMC, anticommunism, and anti-neutralism while condemning "protests that destroyed radio stations, destroyed the Ministry of Information" and religious disunity which had resulted in several deaths. Ironically, despite support of the RMC, chaos at the demonstration pushed the commanding officer—Lieutenant Colonel Lê Văn Mạnh—to order his troops of 100 to fire directly into the crowd killing 4 individuals and wounding another 11. On that same day, another group of some 1000 Catholics "armed with bottles, knives, and other weapons" fought with Buddhist youths in front of the national radio station. Another skirmish between Catholics and Buddhists at a technical school next to the French Embassy. Five Catholics were taken hostage and beaten while 2 were killed by Buddhist youths.<sup>147</sup> Conflict between Catholic and Buddhist youths continued into the 28<sup>th</sup> which destroyed the news-van of *Xây Dựng* resulting in multiple injuries and 1 death.<sup>148</sup>

Riots only came to a close after the call for a cessation of violence by multiple civil leaders. Thích Tâm Châu congratulated the decision of Nguyen Khanh to step down on the 25<sup>th</sup> and sent another communique a few days later expressing that "the aspirations of the Buddhists had been accepted by the government and the RMC and thus our mobilization is now over."<sup>149</sup> The capitol's Student Union, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, issued a statement calling students to return to classes and cease protesting.<sup>150</sup> Đỗ Mậu, the Deputy Prime Minister of Social and Cultural Affairs, shaved his head pleading for the cessation of religious strife.<sup>151</sup> Issued on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, a joint statement by Buddhist leaders and the Arch-Diocese called for "calmness, clarity to guard against the schemes of rogue elements infiltrating in the ranks of the religion to instigate disunity, violence...and disrupt order and security."<sup>152</sup> The journalist union in the capitol issued their own declaration on the 28<sup>th</sup> decrying "recent events...of bloodshed and had weakened the force of the nation" and demanding those in the government and "religious and civil leaders must have measures...to restore order as well as protect the life and property of journalists."<sup>153</sup>

Nguyễn Khánh had made a tactical move during these events. Rather deploying troops to stabilize the situation, the military was ordered to not interfere with the rioting. According to *The Washington Post*, "orders had come down to give the students the widest possible leeway rather than risk further tarnishing of the Khanh regime's image by using strongarm tactics, which were

<sup>147</sup> "1 ngày náo động đẫm máu ở Saigon," *Tự Do*, Aug. 29, 1964; "Vài giờ trước khi Hội Đồng Quân Đội Cách Mạng ban hành các quyết định Bạo Động trước bộ tổng tư lệnh," *Chính Luận*, Aug. 29, 1964; "FIRE ON 3,000 VIET CATHOLICS: TROOPS BATTLE MOB AT SAIGON HDQ," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug 27, 1964; "Gen. Khanh in new Vietnam triumvirate: Day of fighting in Saigon streets," *The Guardian*, Aug 28, 1964; "Ceremonial murder in Saigon riots," *The Guardian*, Aug 29, 1964; "Catholic, Buddhist Mobs War in Saigon," *Boston Globe*, Aug 28, 1964; "Junta Picks Triumvirate to Rule South Vietnam," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 28, 1964.

<sup>148</sup> "Bạo động chiều hôm 28-8-64," *Tự Do*, Aug. 30, 1964.

<sup>149</sup> "TT Châu ca tụng HDQĐCM," *Tự Do*, Aug. 28, 1964; "Từ giờ phút này, Viện Hóa Đạo không chịu trách nhiệm về các bạo động của đồng bào Phật Tử trong toàn quốc," *Tự Do*, Aug. 30, 1964.

<sup>150</sup> "Sinh Viên, Học Sinh sẽ tuyệt thực nếu các va chạm tôn giáo còn tiếp đến," *Tự Do*, Aug. 28, 1964; "Saigon Student Pledge Support to Triumvirate," *The Times of India*, Sep. 1, 1964;

<sup>151</sup> "TT Mậu cạo đầu để kêu gọi chấm dứt xô xát tôn giáo," *Tự Do*, Aug. 30, 1964.

<sup>152</sup> "Thông cáo chung của Viện Hóa Đạo và Tòa Tổng Giám Mục Saigon," *Tự Do*, Aug. 29, 1964.

<sup>153</sup> "Tuyên bố của báo chí thủ đô," *Tự Do*, Aug. 30, 1964.

the notorious hallmark of the deposed regime of Ngo Dinh Diem.”<sup>154</sup> This allowed massive violence and destruction to ensue in virtually every key urban centers of South Vietnam leading many foreign observers to categorize the erupting conflict as a “religious war.” In many ways, continuous skirmishes between Catholic and Buddhist groups following the Vung Tau Charter can be traced back to the brewing antagonism following the November Revolution. However, far from being a “religious war,” the conflicts between Catholic and Buddhists reflected the problems of democracy in South Vietnam. Of contention were not theological disagreements, but rather political ones revolving around how democracy was envisioned after the November Revolution and the association that Catholics had with the deposed authoritarian Diem regime. As *The Guardian* correctly argued, Catholic activism during this period was “a display of strength in reply to Buddhist demonstrations over the past week which led to General Khanh’s decision to leave [his position].”<sup>155</sup>

The mobilization of Catholics following the execution of Ngô Đình Cần—a decision of wrought controversy throughout the Vietnamese republic—had led to the formation of a Catholic bloc that saw itself personally threatened the political strength of the Buddhists. The massive Catholic demonstrations following the 1964 commemoration of the Vesak illustrates how Catholics respond to what they saw as the political superiority of the Buddhist community. While perhaps not as adamant on “democracy” as their Buddhist counterparts, Catholics, too, had a stake on the direction of the ongoing “Revolution” in South Vietnam. “Revolution” and “democracy” were the order of the day. It was shared by not only the Buddhist and students, but virtually every political segment of the Republican society. The demand for the status quo by Catholic protestors illustrates a political difference on that image of democracy. Agreeing the claims of the Khánh administration, the Catholics saw the importance of national security and military supremacy over the communists as a necessity to ensure promises of democratic institutions and civil liberties.

### *Republican Anticommunism and Democracy*

Democracy was envisioned quite differently from how it was understood during the First Republic. Indeed, the Diem administration, throughout its 9-year rule, had portrayed itself as a “Republic.” It argued that it had democratic institutions—such as elections, a Constitution, a Presidential system, and a National Assembly—and that it served the people’s will. Utilizing this fact, the Diem administration portrayed itself as superior to the authoritarian communist regime in the North. In the post-Diem era, authoritarianism was no longer exclusively used to define the communists. It became reinterpreted and primarily utilized to characterize the “old” regime. The claim to democracy after the November Revolution was no longer based on having the formalities of democracy, but rather on democratic representation and a government responsive to the “will of the people.” What that “will” was cannot be one articulated by the State—as the Diem administration had done—but rather must come from the South Vietnamese society itself.

Indeed, what came after the November Revolution was a novel discourse on South Vietnamese “Democracy,” characterized by adamant anti-authoritarianism, the emergence of powerful societal groupings, and the demand for the guarantee of civil liberties. The military administration under Minh and Khánh was broadly understood as “Provisional” governments

<sup>154</sup> “Khanh allows students time for letting off steam,” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1964.

<sup>155</sup> “Gen. Khanh in new Vietnam Triumvirate: Day of fighting in Saigon Streets,” *The Guardian*, Aug. 28, 1964.

which would lay the foundation for transition into civil and democratic rule. For the vast majority in the Republican civil sphere, military rule was never accepted as the permanent structure. The idea of “civil rule,” however, was an extension of a broader discourse on Vietnamese “Democracy”—the specifics of which was left largely undecided following the November Revolution. During 1964, political forces in South Vietnam sought to define the manner of that “Democracy” through both textual debates and public demonstrations. Alternating visions of what that Democracy will ultimately look like were expressed by different groups, but, for the most part, shared in the demand for political representation, “oppositional” voices, and the necessity of democracy in the anticommunist war. Moreover, “Democracy” became elevated to a matter of “revolutionary” importance thus relevant not only to the envisioned structure of the future but took on an ideological value which constituted nationalism and progress.

During the Minh and Khánh era, the 9-years under Ngô Đình Diệm came to serve as the focal point of contrast through which this “Democracy” was articulated. The significance of this narrative of “Democracy” is demonstrated in the measures that the Interregnum government took to ensure nationalist parties, religious groups, and other components of society had a say and representation in the affairs of the state. Demonstrating contrast to the Diệm administration was necessary to generate any modicum of legitimacy. Indeed, to be democratic during the interregnum years was not simply democracy for democracy’s sake, but to be democratic was to be “revolutionary,” to be “new,” to be anti-authoritarianism, anti-Diệm. This democratic vision was the necessary wave of “progress” that would advance the Republican nation.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January, 1964, Nguyễn Duy Cần asked the questions that had prevailed since the collapse of the First Republic:

“To talk about ‘the new regime,’ we obviously cannot help but mention the ‘old regime’ to use as a contrast. But this ‘new regime,’ what kind of regime was it? As well as what is ‘the old regime?’ How must we understand the terms ‘new’ and ‘old’? This newness, must it be a newness both internally and externally, or is this newness only something outside as one politician argued that the Revolution is simply a change of name?”

What of the Revolution? “Should the Revolution be extreme, completely washing away everything that has been...Or should the revolution be peaceful, orderly and according to the conditions of the country...? Should we hold onto what was good, eliminate what was bad as to not waste the contributions of good men who had great efforts since the days of the old regime?” And what of the people themselves? What does it mean to be a “new person” versus a person of the old?<sup>156</sup>

In the immediate days following the November assassination, the journal *Bách Khoa*—like other media outlets—reconstructed the political question of the day around this concept of “old” versus “new.” In the first *Bách Khoa* article following the collapse of the First Republic, Tiểu Dân (The Commoner) described the “old regime” as one that is “dated and oppositional to progress” and the “new regime” was one that promised “true Freedom and actual Democracy.” In the piece, the terms “true Freedom” and “actual Democracy” were used to demonstrate the contradiction between the promise of Republicanism and the experienced reality. The ideals of Freedom and Democracy—long been proselytized by the First Republic—had been “transformed into things of lies and deception....distorting the value and meaning of these terminologies,

<sup>156</sup> “Chế Độ Cũ...Chế Độ Mới và Người Cũ...Người Mới” *Tự Do*, Jan. 3, 1964.



bringing forth a strange reversal in recognizing...the value of the term and its reality.” Freedom meant only “freedom for those who held power in the regime,” and Democracy was only a “monstrous regime, combining the ingenuous brutality of Medieval Feudalism with the diabolical ‘science’ of Fascism.” What was “white” was in reality “black,” what is of “the Fatherland, the Nation” meant for those who held power. It was precisely in the Personalist Republic that “personhood was painfully stepped upon more than anywhere else.”<sup>157</sup>

For *Tiểu Dân*, the contradictions between ideals of the Republic and actualization of its policies had fundamentally devalued the meanings of the “sacred, beautiful...noble” terms upon which the South Vietnamese nation was founded. Thus, representing the intellectuals of the South, *Tiểu Dân* called for not only the “restoration of Justice” as much of society had done, but also the “restoration of values.” This meant returning the actual meanings of ideals like Democracy and Freedom to their original intent and restoring their importance as the South moved on to new beginnings.<sup>158</sup>

When *Tiểu Dân* wrote his piece, the theme of “newness” laid alongside necessary lessons that must be drawn from the past: “to draw historical experience in order to contemplate and act in these days of new.” The main lesson that should have been learned from the First Republic was that of authoritarianism—an authoritarianism partly resulting from being enabled by an unconscientious rank and file. Irresponsibility amongst the rank and file meant a “white contract” for those who held the reign of power in the old regime—a government without accountability. The regime had perpetually proselytized and indoctrinated slogans that “people have become so familiar with to the point of boredom.”<sup>159</sup> Indoctrination within an environment of fear and irresponsibility had cultivated not only authoritarianism in the regime, but an “authoritarian attitude” amongst the population. This “attitude” was evident by the way individuals sought to only protect and benefit themselves and their families. Ultimately, despite the control and silencing by the authoritarian regime, authoritarianism could not have manifested to the degree that it did without the unconscientious participation of its citizens. The regime may have “deified” themselves, but “we—or at least a mentionable proportion amongst us—had sacralized them.”<sup>160</sup>

The lesson garnered was that authoritarianism was not inevitable. Nor is authoritarianism simply a product of actions from above. Rather, authoritarianism is partially the responsibility of its citizens. That citizenry must not be silent, must not be irresponsible, and must not tolerate any form of authoritarianism from this point forward. As the author concluded: “if we do not want authoritarianism, if we are not passively and compromisingly vile, surrendering, then there would never have been an authoritarian regime.” After all, the government reflects its people, and each citizen of the South had a responsibility in the last 9 years of making that authoritarianism possible.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>157</sup> *Tiểu Dân*, “Cảm nghĩ về sự cáo chung của một chế độ độc tài,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 165 (Nov. 1963), 1-6.

<sup>158</sup> *Tiểu Dân*, “Cảm nghĩ về sự cáo chung của một chế độ độc tài,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 165 (Nov. 1963), 1-6.

<sup>159</sup> the...refrain[s] of ‘Family, Rice and Clothing’... ‘what can I do in the common misery.’ The former “refrain” come from consistent propaganda of returning the traditional importance of “family” to the Vietnamese people—in contrast to the communists—and providing each citizen with “enough rice to eat, clothes to wear”—a central goal of Personalist development. The latter is a twist on the key theme of the “condition of underdevelopment” of the First Republic.

<sup>160</sup> *Tiểu Dân*, “Cảm nghĩ về sự cáo chung của một chế độ độc tài,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 165 (Nov. 1963), 1-6.

<sup>161</sup> *Tiểu Dân*, “Cảm nghĩ về sự cáo chung của một chế độ độc tài,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 165 (Nov. 1963), 1-6.

The “newness” that Tiểu Dân envisioned was a political one which broke with the South Vietnamese authoritarian past. This newness meant a new sense of responsibility, values, and respect for Democracy and Freedom—actualized not by those in power, but by the citizens of the Southern Republic. It was a call for civil society—critique, “invectives and curses,” intellectual leadership and responsibility—to emerge in preventing the return of authoritarianism that once marked the “9 years of misery” of the First Republic. Trần Thúc Linh, another contributor to *Bách Khoa*, called for a reformation of the South’s conception of “Justice.” Critiquing the form of Justice that came from the top down, Trần Thúc Linh argued that the “November Revolution” set the stage for the inauguration of “social justice” in South Vietnam. For the author, this meant that the goal of “exterminating communism” cannot be placed above the freedoms and rights of the citizens. “Justice [thus] is not a blessing from above; justice is no longer a means of revenge; justice is a natural necessity of humanity.” “Social justice” is contrasted with the form of justice that came from those in power—symbolized by the “special courts” and an outdated judicial system. The establishment of social justice in the South, according to the author, was not the sole responsibility of the new regime. The people of the South must not “simply wait for the administration to grant every reform.” Rather, the ideals of social justice must “penetrate” into the minds of “every rank of the people” and that the people organize to interact and intervene in the existing system, “the government must inevitably adapt to these new demands.”<sup>162</sup>

The image presented in the two *Bách Khoa* pieces presented above articulates a conceptual change in the role of citizenry under the Republic animated by “civil society” and such a change reflected the spirit of “newness” of the time. Those “nine years of misery” was a product of exclusively delegating the task of nation-building and political reform to the state. Because of this delegation—resulting from a power-hungry leadership, fear, or irresponsibility of the citizens—had made “Democracy” and “Justice” into bastardized concepts abused by those in power. This was the “authoritarianism” that the post-1963 South saw, and the solution developed was to inaugurate the active engagement of the citizenry as an *independent* force that stood apart from the state. The citizenry must “demand,” throw “curses and invectives” at administrative wrongdoing, and initiate engagement with the government so that it would “inevitably adapt to these new demands.” This conception of “old” versus “new” was not exclusive to the intellectuals of *Bách Khoa*; it serves as a nationwide political apparatus utilized by political organizations, religions, and even members of the state themselves.<sup>163</sup>

At the forefront of this demand for “newness”—which came to be symbolized as “True Democracy and Freedom,” “anti-authoritarianism,” “revolution,” and “social justice”—were the Buddhists who linked their oppressed experiences under Diệm administration with demands for retribution against “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party,” their demands for “social justice” and

<sup>162</sup> Trần Thúc Linh, “các mạng tổ chức tư pháp,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 1965 (Nov. 15, 1963), 27-34.

<sup>163</sup> On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December, Dương Văn Minh redesignated an area within the city capitol for the exclusive usage by the Ministry of Education. This area, Thành Cộng Hòa, was historically utilized by the Diệm regime to quarter the personal army of the President, reaching the size of a brigade. Their convenient positioning was meant to protect the President in times of a coup or military threats to the regime. The redesignation of this area to be used for education—upon which the present-day University of Social Sciences and Humanities was built—was symbolic of the change of priorities that was to mark the new regime from the old. Speeches from Dương Văn Minh, the Minister of Education, and the Student Union reflects how this paradigm of “old” and “new” was prevalent (“Diễn Văn của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch HĐQT nhân lễ bàn giao thành cộng hòa cho bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục,” “Diễn Văn của Ông Tổng Trưởng Bộ Quốc Gia Giáo Dục,” “Diễn Văn của Đại Diện Ban Thường Vụ Đại Hội Đại Diện Sinh Viên Lâm Thời,” *Văn Hóa Nguyệt San*, 88(Dec. 1963).

freedom of religion, and their adamancy for representation and democratic rule. The case of Ngô Đình Cẩn in April and May of 1964 sparked calls for “resoluteness with the old putrid regime.” His execution—amongst those who supported the execution—was seen as symbolic of the “resolve” of the revolutionary government against the “henchmen” of the old regime.<sup>164</sup>

These demands were not exclusive to the Buddhists. Đặng Văn Sung made this issue poignant in a May opinion piece. The execution of Ngô Đình Cẩn was a political event which solidified the need to “excise all forms of putridity and errors.” This was necessary, according to the author, because it allowed the mission of “developing the nation and anticommunism [to be] placed upon a new foundation.” To “cleansing” the old society was to “redirect the revolution in accordance to a democratic path.” Moreover, the “cleansing” of the old society would build unity and “restore all the fighting vitality of the people” in the anticommunist war. However, this must be a “national policy of *completely* cleansing the old regime.” It cannot be haphazardly implemented in sensational cases such as Ngô Đình Cẩn. The regime cannot execute criminals of the old regime while allowing the “machine of state” to continue operating as it did, allowing members of the old regime to “furtively operate.” To cultivate that unity for the anticommunist war, the “cleansing” must be “resolute” and the state cannot exist as both “old and new”—the state must be absolute on which side it would support.<sup>165</sup>

*Tự Do*<sup>166</sup> published an opinion piece by a reader who demanded “new people” in the “new regime.” Who were these “new people?” For the reader, “new people” were those who “had contributed positively in destroying the authoritarian machinery, had fought for freedom and democracy.” They stood in categorical juxtaposition to “the henchmen of the old authoritarian regime which knew nothing of nation or people, those who worked only for themselves and their family, borrowed from the colonialists, the feudalists....and had not demonstrated change after the Revolution.” The administration, however, had not gone far enough in replacing the “old people.” To simply have revolutionary generals at the top of the administration is not enough. There were “so many new people flowing with abilities and had the confidence of the people”—the young, those who were “willing to sacrifice everything to complete the revolution,” those who had “clear ideals of struggle, had lived with those ideals for the nation, the people.” And it is these people—not just the military men—who must lead and participate within the administration.<sup>167</sup> Another *Tự Do* reader argued similarly calling for the administration to utilize those “young and pure people with a heart of revolution and progress beating soundly, and know only to fight for the collective, for equality, for freedom and the Vietnamese Fatherland.”<sup>168</sup>

“Newness” became equated with a change of personnel, a removal from the State those “vestiges” that had made the “old” regime work so poorly and so undemocratically. To “cleansing”

<sup>164</sup> “Chung Quanh vấn đề thanh toàn chế độ cũ; giết hay không giết,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 28, 1964.

<sup>165</sup> Đặng Văn Sung, “Từ Vụ Án Ngô Đình Cẩn Đến Việc Thanh Toán Chế Độ Cũ Nói Chung,” *Chính Luận*, May 1, 1964.

<sup>166</sup> *Tự Do* is a unique newspaper in that it is one of the very few newspapers that existed during the First Republic and continued to publish until the end of the Second Republic. In the final months of the Diệm administration, the paper was shut down for reporting on the activities of the rebel students and Buddhists. It was reopened in early January of 1964 and survived through reader support whilst the majority of other newspapers that resurfaced or came out during the same period died off.

<sup>167</sup> Hoàng Lê Ngọc, “Chế Độ Cũ Thối Nát Quát! Chế Độ Mới Chậm Chạp Quá!” *Tự Do*, Jan. 13, 1964.

<sup>168</sup> Liệt Anh, “Cần Phải Có Những Con Người Mới trong Chế Độ Mới,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 14, 1964.

the State was not simply “revolutionary,” it was the definition of nationalism and devotion to the progress of the nation. Within that paradigm of “old” versus “new,” the Republican civil society debated what that image of “newness” would mean in actuality. For some, it meant avoiding the “old tire marks” of the former regime by eliminating corruption, ensuring civil liberties, and reforming the political structure.<sup>169</sup> Some saw this “reformation” as evident in eliminating the “Presidential System” and the need to revise the legal and judicial structure of the country.<sup>170</sup> For others, it meant the decentralization of state.<sup>171</sup> Still others, it meant enacting real policies to ensure the masses had accessible housing and land.<sup>172</sup>

The question of “newness” was never divorced from how anticommunism was perceived during the Republican Interregnum. Indeed, the reformation of structure, the replacement of people, the establishment of democracy—all that “revolution” entailed—was directed at the effective prosecution of the anticommunist war and victory over the communist enemy. As early as January, the connection between the anticommunist war and the enactment of “social justice” and “democracy” were intertwined. Dân Tôi (My People), a regular opinion contributor to *Tự Do*, emphasized the inability to defeat communism from purely military methods. The war, according to the author, was fundamentally a political one. “Politics,” here, meant not simply propaganda or psychological warfare, but establishing the democratic institutions that people—particularly the countryside—can support and unify around. The anticommunist struggle will never succeed if people “pour their bones and blood...to protect the cars and mansions, as well as position, of those at the top.” Anticommunism must be “for oneself, for the nation, for the people.” Without the enactment of democracy, social justice, and “revolution,” communist propaganda will succeed, and it will be the communist enemy who would win the “hearts” of the countryside.<sup>173</sup>

One contributor to *Chính Luận* argued similarly. The author compares the work of a doctor (curing the disease) with the work of the state (ruling the population). The “virus of communism” had been allowed to manifest because of the “putrid” nature of the old regime. Like a doctor, the state must “cultivate the earth in such a way that it may have the strength to combat the virus.” This, according to the author, was more important than the actual “extermination of the virus.” This meant creating those structures of democracy, “raising their standards of living—materially as well as spiritually—listen to the press...equalize the injustices of society.”<sup>174</sup>

Anti-neutralism, as well, was considered “revolutionary.” Neutralism, as it was during the First Republic, meant “unconditional surrender to the communists in the most stupid of manners.” According to one author, the people of the North had been “dreaming of that northern march which would liberate them from the red hell.” To “surrender”—as neutralists desired—would be to “destroy this hope” from half the people of Vietnam and “betray all those who love the country.” It was only international parties divorced from the realities of Vietnam who were

<sup>169</sup> Dân Tôi, “Làm cách nào để tránh vết xe cũ,” *Tự Do*, Jan 21, 1964.

<sup>170</sup> Lê Vĩnh Băng “Thế nào là chế độ cũ...chế độ mới?” *Tự Do*, Jan. 15, 1964.

<sup>171</sup> “Đề tránh độc tài không nên tập trung chính quyền,” *Tự Do*, Jan 18, 1964.

<sup>172</sup> Từ Chung, “Nhân Quyết Định Tạm Ngưng Đuổi Nhà Đuổi Đất,” *Chính Luận* May 5, 1964.

<sup>173</sup> Dân Tôi, “Làm cách nào để tránh vết xe cũ,” *Tự Do*, Jan 21-27, 1964; see also Khiêm Dung, “Cần Gấp Rút Tọa Lập Chế Độ Mới,” *Tự Do*, Jan 28, 1964: “The ideological war require [new] people with evident ideals of freedom and democracy.”

<sup>174</sup> Nguyễn Hữu Phiêm, “Trị Bện và Trị Nước, Trị Dân,” *Chính Luận*, May 2, 1964.

pushing for neutralization. In summation, “to accept the resolution to neutralize the South is to betray the revolution.”<sup>175</sup>

When it comes to the vision of democracy that came after the November Revolution, competing political components in the Republican civil society could agree on two fundamentals: civil liberties and representation. Civil liberties issues in South Vietnam focused on two key “freedoms”: the freedom of the press and the freedom of religion. Given the growth of religious organizations during the period, the “freedom of religion” was an obvious demand. Following the events in Duy Xuyên, for example, Buddhist leaders focused on the “oppression” that came from the “vestiges” of the old regime and the continuing “injustice” against Buddhists in the Central region.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, demonstrations staged by Catholics in the month of June utilized the language of “religious discrimination” and “injustice” to articulate what they saw as undue arrest and persecution of Catholics following the November Revolution. “Freedom of religion” were readily verified by both the Thơ and Khánh administration and continually mobilized by the two dominant religious groups throughout the Interregnum to verify the ideological legitimacy of their political demands.

When it came to “representation”—the second crucial aspect of South Vietnamese conception of democracy—the issue revolved, firstly, around encouraging the political activism of nationalist parties and the legal protection of “oppositional” voices within the public sphere and, secondly, the consistent demand for general elections. When Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn—the Deputy Prime Minister of Pacification—announced his support for oppositional parties on Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>,<sup>177</sup> he was confronting allegations that his party—the Đại Việt—was dominating the administration. However, he was also engaging in a discourse on democratic representation initiated in the early days of 1964. Việt Anh had written on the topic in a January article in *Bách Khoa* when he argued for a “step by step” implementation of Democracy that would cultivate a robust and well organized “opposition” politics enabled and encouraged by the “new” regime. This “opposition” in South Vietnamese politics amounted to independent factions—or, in the author’s words, “non-politically affiliated organizations”—that must be respected and protected by the government through the absolute freedom of speech, organization, and press.<sup>178</sup>

For the author, the regime must lay the foundations for a limited form of opposition to emerge and, before reaching full “oppositional democracy,” embryonic organizations that would eventually become that oppositional force must find rooting within the populace. These organizations cannot be “ghost organizations” utilized to compete over ministerial positions or a seat in the senate as seen in the previous regime. To allow oppositional and differentiated voices to emerge, guarantee of the freedom of organization and freedom of press must be made. The only limitation that should be placed should be on communism. As acknowledged by the author, this is a shaky foundation but was necessary given the current conditions of the country. The people must trust the regime and the regime must not abuse the faith the populace placed on them to exploit Republican anticommunism for alternative purposes.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>175</sup> “Cách Mạng ở Đâu?” *Tự Do*, Feb. 7, 1964.

<sup>176</sup> “Sau Khi Yết Kiến Thủ Tướng, Thượng Tọa Thiện Minh Cho Biết: Phật Giáo Biểu Dương Lực Lượng,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 6, 1964

<sup>177</sup> “Chánh Phủ không những công nhận đối lập...” *Tự Do*, Feb. 22, 1964

<sup>178</sup> Việt Anh, “Đi tìm một đường lối dân chủ cho xã hội Việt Nam ngày nay,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 168 (Jan. 1, 1964), 3-12.

<sup>179</sup> Việt Anh, “Đi tìm một đường lối dân chủ cho xã hội Việt Nam ngày nay,” *Bách Khoa*, Is. 168 (Jan. 1, 1964), 3-12.

As new measures were established to encourage the reentry of formerly clandestine nationalist parties into the public sphere, newspapers like *Tự Do* encouraged oppositional voices to emerge and called for cooperation between nationalist blocs, oppositional voices, and the regime. Competition was encouraged by the newspaper—not for influence, but rather for the collective good and the anticommunist struggle.<sup>180</sup> One editorial argued that political parties, as the “foundation of freedom and democracy,” needed a “clear program, clearly demonstrate a nationalist and democratic spirit, and appraised of their civic duty.” Party members needed to work for the nation rather than their parties and become the “vanguard” of democratic development.<sup>181</sup> Robust partisan politics, however, never really materialized in South Vietnam.<sup>182</sup> Despite the “representation” that was provided through Khánh’s cabinet, political parties in general failed at garnering popular support, establishing any guidelines to work with the administration, and were heavily marred by factional infighting.<sup>183</sup> In April, even the most privileged of the nationalist parties—the Đại Việt—had not open their party for public membership<sup>184</sup> and in June, the administration continued its call for nationalist parties to “step

<sup>180</sup> “Nhân Dân Mong Đợi Sự Đoàn Kết,” *Tự Do*, Feb. 19, 1964; “Các đảng phái đối lập nên thi đua với Chính Phủ như thế nào,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 13, 1964; a piece in *Chính Luận* defined “freedom” as respect for “oppositional” voices: Nguyễn Hữu Phiêm, “Thế Nào Là Tự Do,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 8, 1964.

<sup>181</sup> Hoàng Lê Khiêm Dung, “Hoạt Động Đảng Phái Là Nền Tảng Của Dân Chủ Tự Do,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 21-23, 1964,

<sup>182</sup> The most grandiose gesture by the Khánh regime to build cooperation was in June when the administration convened in various conferences with representatives from nationalist parties, religious organizations, and journalists to establish a “Party Regulation” *Quy Chế Đảng Phái* as a measure to ensure nationalist parties could directly engage in state affairs and national politics. The effort was brought into total disarray. For one, little more than half of those invited to the preliminary conferences actually attended. For another, some—amongst those attending—took issue with the lack of any formal powers political parties had in shaping the regulations. An elected body of 8 representing all major nationalist parties was eventually established to negotiate regulations. The most important issues were the relative power that each party would have (historical versus newly established organizations), whether smaller factions which had broken from the original party would be recognized (as some factions were composed of little more than a few tens of people), and the political structure that parties would be operating in (multiparty system, biparty system, or triparty system (“Kết Quả Bất ngờ của đại hội qui chế đảng phái,” “Đại Lược Chương Trình Hội Thảo,” “Danh Sách 8 Đại Diện Đảng Phái,” *Tự Do*, June 16, 1964; “Những Vụ Lầm Cầm Bên Lề Đại Hội,” *Chính Luận*, June 16, 1964). When the 8 representatives actually met with the administration, allegations were raised about statements made by Khánh which implied belittling the relevance of nationalist parties. The inability to resolve exigence questions on the positions of individual nationalist parties resulted in the formation of the “United Nationalist Force”—a political front supported by the administration and headed by Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn. In its public inauguration, Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn presented the organization as the political “intermediary” between the population and the State. According to Hoàn, “the essence of the state since forever had been to rule [thus] the State and the people always had a separation, creating opposition from each side.” Hoàn’s “Force” was meant to negotiate between these two entities so that the people “can participate in or inspect the state.” Moreover, the discordant nature of partisan politics at the time require a political front that can unite the various nationalist parties around a common mission and ensure that these nationalist parties do not continue operating in secret (“Chỉ có chính đảng mới làm nòng cốt trung gian,” *Tự Do*, July 14, 1964). The “Force” ended up doing very little and accusations of disunity, Đại Việt betrayal, and possible coup circulated by both the press and members of the administration did nothing to build the envisioned “cooperation.”

<sup>183</sup> “Nạn Đa Đảng Cần Phải Được Giải Quyết,” *Tự Do*, May 13, 1964; Việt Nhân, “Vấn Đề Hoạt Động Đảng Phái,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 29, 1964.

<sup>184</sup> “Chung Quanh Việc Từ Chức của Ô. Hà Thúc Kỳ, Tổng Trưởng Nội Vụ,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 9, 1964. By most accounts, Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn was discreetly recruiting “cadres” from the administration and military during his tenure as Deputy Premier. This led to rumors of a possible Đại Việt coup against Khánh (“Câu Chuyện Ông Hoàn,” *Lập Trường*, June 5, 1964). A CIA report describes the Party as “a factional coalition of individual politicians holding vaguely similar political goals” and lacked a “centralized party structure” (“The Situation in South Vietnam (21-28 February 1964).

out of secrecy.”<sup>185</sup> Religious organizations, on the other hand, used demonstrations and protests to ensure that their voices would be heard by the government. Despite these pitfalls in building that robust “opposition” politics, the issue of political “representation” became fundamental to the South Vietnamese vision of democracy. This fact was not lost on Khánh who, from early on, sought to ensure that his regime at least had the image of diverse representation.<sup>186</sup>

The discussion on political representation was sparked—in part—by the promise of general elections which would be the first step toward permanent democratic, civil rule. Throughout the Interregnum, three bodies were formed—consisting mostly of civilians—to serve either formally or informally as national legislatures and draft procedures for the promised elections. Although members were state-selected “notables” or politicians, these legislative bodies were attempts by the Interregnum administrations to demonstrate fulfillment of the democratic promise inherent in the November Revolution.<sup>187</sup> The inevitability of general elections made it a key topic of debate in the South Vietnamese press. Not only were individuals contemplating the future structure of a democratic South Vietnam (Parliamentary versus Presidential system; separation of powers), some debated over the feasibility of national elections given the state of war while others pushed for quicker transition into civil, democratic rule. From as early as January, *Tự Do* had pushed for immediate elections. In an early piece, *Tự Do* had argued that the illegitimacy and opposition to the Thơ government was due to the fact that it was unelected and, as implied, to avoid criticism, a government had to be “derived from the people.” The biggest uproar over elections, however, came only following the disbandment

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Weekly Report of the Intelligence and Reporting Subcommittee of the Interagency Vietnam Coordinating Committee,” *DDRS*, CIA weekly report, is. 28 Feb. 1964, declassified 26 June 1975. Cited in Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 45).

<sup>185</sup> “Thủ Tướng Khánh nói với các chính đảng: cần bước ra khỏi bí mật,” *Tự Do*, June 15, 1964.

<sup>186</sup> During the National Day of Resentment celebration, the Information Ministry distributed a booklet on the “Program of Action” of the Khánh administration. In that booklet, “representation of all political and religious directions” is explicitly acknowledged as the foundation of the Khánh’s regime legitimacy. For Khánh, “representation” was the “democratic guarantee of the administration” and justify the support of the people. The draft distributed in July of 1964 is more explicit on the party and religious policies of the administration. What is attainable from its previous version in March simply stated that the Premier “had called upon the support of all nationalists, religious leaders, and political parties” and that “all religions have the right to develop equality in the spirit of unity” (March version: “Chương Trình 1 Năm của CP,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 10, 1964). July version: “CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HOẠT ĐỘNG CỦA CHÍNH PHỦ VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA,” *Tài liệu học tập của Sở Tác Mẽ Nhân ngày Quốc Hận 20/7/1964*, NCN: 855.

<sup>187</sup> The first was the “Council of Sages” formally established under Thơ administration. The Council of Sages continued to informally meet during the Khánh administration but was later shutdown in favor of an Inter-Ministerial body which would take over the task of drafting procedures for a Constituent Assembly. The second legislative civilian body formed was the High National Council (HNC) following the scrapping of the Vũng Tàu Charter and the August riots. Essentially from the end of August to November, South Vietnam was without a constitution. The HNC drafted a Provisional Charter which inaugurated civil rule in South Vietnam within that period and, throughout the Hương administration, the HNC served formally as a legislature and was tasked with establishing procedures for general elections until its disbandment in December. The Provisional Charter continued to operate after Hương until it was scrapped in June of 1965 as South Vietnam returns to military rule. Following the Hương administration, the National Legislative Council (NLC) was set up which incorporated a number of military men though mostly composed of “notable” civilians. Certain democratic achievements were made by the NLC including successful prosecution of municipal elections on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May as the NLC built on the work completed by the HNC during the Hương era. Infighting and the lack of clarity on their scope of power and administrative role derailed the body in late May when conflicts over a technicality in the Provisional Charter caused a crisis of state. The NLC was formally shutdown following the return of military rule.

of the Council of Sages in April.<sup>188</sup> *Chính Luận* ran a piece denouncing the move as a transition away from democracy and civil rule and urged immediate reversal of policies.<sup>189</sup> They were joined by *Tự Do* which ran a column pushing for immediate preparations for the elections, called for nationalist parties to engage more publicly, and demanded that such an Assembly must one that “truly represented the people, truly cared for the national benefit.”<sup>190</sup> The administration quickly declared that Constituent Assembly elections would be held within the next 4-6 months and that an “inter-ministerial committee” rather than the Council of Sages would continue with preparations.<sup>191</sup> Without any signs of progress on elections being made, *Tự Do* again called for immediate preparation for election procedures in late April.<sup>192</sup>

There were, however, alternative voices. One contributor of *Chính Luận* argued that an immediate implementation of a National Assembly is undesirable. According to the piece, not only were political parties not fully restored, other aspects of democracy like civil liberties and the specific roles and limitations of the RMC have not been clearly identified. Moreover, the piece warned that electoral measures and the autonomy of the legislature was required as despotic regimes like that of Diệm had these institutions though were manipulated to ensure authoritarian rule.<sup>193</sup> Another author, this time in *Tự Do*, called for municipal elections prior to that of the Constituent Assembly. In the piece, the author argued that after “9 years under the Nhu Diệm era,” the people were no longer “ignorant and simple as in the past.” Given the “lessons” of the past, what absolutely must be accomplished in the elections is to “avoid” the mistake the Vietnamese people made in 1955, granting the state the possibility of becoming authoritarian. Municipal elections were needed primarily because it would build a strong democratic base upon which the more important Constituent Assembly elections can be conducted. Moreover, elections must not only be free, it must be open to inspection by the South Vietnamese press whose role, according to the author, would be a “forum to gather all the opinions in the nation.”<sup>194</sup>

The adamant demand for “democracy,” “anti-authoritarianism,” removal of “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party,” and “social justice” were not exclusive propriety of the Buddhists as other authors had implied. It was, very much, quite the universal one. A number of nationalist organization like the Khố Xã Hội Dân Chủ and Việt Nam Phục Quốc Hội had expressed their support for democratic institutions, civil rule and a “truly revolutionary” administration.<sup>195</sup> The

<sup>188</sup> “Số Phận Hội Đồng Nhân Sĩ được công bố sáng Chủ Nhật 5-4,” *Tự Do*, April 6, 1964.

<sup>189</sup> Đặng Văn Sung, “Thư Ngỏ Gửi Các Nhà Cách Mạng Tham Chính,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 8, 1964. Another piece defined “Freedom” as the clear “separation of power” between the executive and the legislative structures and advocated for an independent and civil legislative body. Nguyễn Hữu Phiêm, “Thế Nào Là Tự Do,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 8, 1964.

<sup>190</sup> “Cần Dốc toàn lực vào việc chuẩn bị Quốc Hội Lập Hiến,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 13, 1964.

<sup>191</sup> “Giải Tán Hội Đồng Nhân Sĩ,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 7, 1964.

<sup>192</sup> “Chúng Ta Đã Làm Được Những Gì Để Chuẩn Bị Quốc Hội Lập Hiến?” *Tự Do*, Apr. 28, 1964.

<sup>193</sup> Phạm Hữu Chương, “Thử Tìm Một Biên Pháp Xây Dựng,” *Chính Luận*, May 12, 1964; see also Đặng Văn Sung, (“Trước Khi Bầu Quốc Hội Lập Hiến Cần Tọa Ngay các Điều Kiện Thi Hành Hiến Pháp,” *Chính Luận*, May 13, 1964) who argued that what mattered was less about completing the elections in the designated time period, but rather ensuring that the Constituent Assembly had power and elections were conducted correctly.

<sup>194</sup> Phan Huy Anh, “Đề Tián Tới Quốc Hội Lập Hiến,” *Tự Do*, May 3, 1964. The piece also argues that the Constituent Assembly cannot turn into the National Assembly. A second election must be conducted to create the National Assembly after the Constituent Assembly drafted the constitution.

<sup>195</sup> Khố Xã Hội Dân Chủ established 3 purposes for its organization: 1) convene the National Assembly, 2) revise the Provisional Constitution, and 3) establish a “truly revolutionary administration.” They had also called for a civil



multi-party front—the United Nationalist Force—formed under Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn in July proclaimed its ideological values to be “anticommunism, anti-neutralism, creating free democracy, and enacting social justice.”<sup>196</sup> Even the Catholics—those who defended Khánh’s administration in the August riots—had demonstrated in demand of “true democracy” and opposed “religious discrimination” in June.<sup>197</sup> As protests ensued in August, *Xây Dựng* mobilized the language of “True Democracy” to criticize the centralization of all administrative powers within the hands of the military and called upon Khánh to place the anticommunist war “within a framework of a complete and enduring revolution” by establishing democratic institutions.<sup>198</sup>

Indeed, following the November Revolution, the language of “democracy”—if not its actual implementation—attained a near universality within South Vietnam. That language of “democracy” was interwoven with older ideas of Republican anticommunism, particularly anti-neutralism. The demand for “resoluteness” with communist sympathizers and neutralists propagated during the First Republic became re-appropriated in the demand for “resoluteness” with the “vestiges” of the old regime.<sup>199</sup> It meant a “resoluteness” to fulfill the “demands of the people,” to enact democracy, and “true revolution.” Democracy—as it was conceptualized—was a necessary component for success in the anticommunist war. It was bounded to South Vietnamese nationalism and vision of Republicanism rather than a divorced concept that

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administration to replace the military one, and a separation of power between the Head of State and the Chairman of the RMC. It is led by Hoàng Cơ Bình who eventually became a member of the HNC. Its board is composed of “multiple factions like Quốc Dân Đảng, Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, Đại Việt Quốc Dân Đảng, Đại Việt Duy Dân, Phục Quốc Đảng,” (“Khối Xã Hội Dân Chủ Đòi Hỏi,” *Tự Do*, June 16, 1964; Khối Dân Chủ--Xã Hội hợp báo Đòi Thành Lập Chính Phủ Cách Mạng Thật Sự,” *Chính Luận*, Aug 1, 1964). Việt Nam Phục Quốc Hội, for example, declared their adamancy in “fighting for independence, freedom and democracy” (“Việt Nam Phục Quốc Hội mở đại hội toàn quốc,” *Tự Do*, July 28, 1964)

<sup>196</sup> Representatives from Dân Chủ Cấp Tiên, Dân Chủ Xã Hội Đảng, Đại Việt Quốc Dân Đảng, Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Kháng Chiến, Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng, as well as non-party, Christian and Buddhist affiliates make up the main board of the organization. The United Nationalist Force represents some 15 political organizations. The main Catholic political organization—Central Committee for Catholic Struggle—did not participate. Catholic had no representation on the board. (“Chỉ có chính đảng mới làm nội trung gian,” *Tự Do*, July 14, 1964).

<sup>197</sup> “Biểu Tình Từ Gia Kiệm, Biên Hòa về và mít tinh lớn tại thủ đô,” “Tuyên Ngộ Của Khối Công Giáo Việt Nam,” *Chính Luận*, June 9, 1964.

<sup>198</sup> “Phải Thành lập một tân chính phủ theo tiêu chuẩn nào?” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 24, 1964; In August, as student protests ensued, a piece in *Xây Dựng* praised the willingness of students to “struggle” but argued that that struggle must be one guided by an “intellectual direction.” Hoàng Hải, “Đối tượng tranh đấu của sinh viên,” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 25, 1964. In another editorial, *Xây Dựng* called for a strong, anticommunist government, but argued that this government must be democratic and free (“Quần chúng và cuộc cải tiến,” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 21, 1964). Before students even protested, *Xây Dựng* had warned that “a governmental policy to which the people is indifferent or does not support is already disadvantageous [to the government], but if the people oppose [that policy] then that policy cannot succeed (“Có cần quan tâm đến một vài sự dị nghị trong quân chúng?” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 22, 1964). Following the student protests, the newspaper became much more openly critical. It once argued that “If Lieutenant General Nguyễn Khánh is authoritarian, betrays the revolution, then it will not just be 400 or 500 of us who stands up to oppose, but the entirety of the people have the responsibility to stand up to overthrow him and his cabinet” (“Hai cuộc biểu tình của sinh viên,” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 26, 1964).

<sup>199</sup> Resoluteness with the Cần Lao mentioned in Đặng Văn Sung, “Từ Vụ Án Ngô Đình Cần Đến Việc Thanh Toán Chế Độ Cũ Nói Chung,” *Chính Luận*, May 1, 1964; “Đề rãnh tay tiêu diệt giặc ngoài, đề chặt đứt bàn tay phá hoại của lưu manh bên trong,” *Chính Luận*, May 25, 1964.

juxtaposed the “democratic” demands of the Buddhists<sup>200</sup> vis-à-vis the “anticommunist” politics of the Catholics and nationalist groups. What was shared between competing political groups was a discourse that allowed for broad ideological utility and modular application.

Given the context of democratic upheaval following the November Revolution, the fact that the Vŭng Tàu Charter—which centralized power within a single man—was adamantly and violently opposed should not be a surprise. Indeed, anti-Cần Lao sentiments help explain the violence against Catholics and “vestiges” of the old regime during riots. That anti-Cần Lao adamancy merged with demands for democratic institutions, civil liberties, and political representation—all of which were seemingly erased with Khánh’s Vŭng Tàu Charter. It was a betrayal of the democratic promise after the November Revolution as well as the envisioned hope of a free, civil society. In some ways, that betrayal of democracy was also a betrayal against the nation and the anticommunist war. If democracy was necessary for the success of the anticommunist struggle, authoritarianism implied in the Vŭng Tàu Charter betrayed the possibility of that success. Poignantly, following the scrapping of the Vŭng Tàu Charter, a piece in *Chinh Nghĩa*—a forum for the Southern branch of the VNQDD—interpreted the events as an extension of the people’s opposition to “reactionary policies which went against the path of progress.” Furthermore, the article argued that there was no such thing as a “peaceful revolution” and to conduct revolution, one must “dig out at the root all reactionary things, people and activities that stall the revolutionary work.” Repeating allegations of the Buddhists, the article decried the Khánh administration as manipulated by “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party which planned a fallacious revolution to completely retake state power” and walked “a dictatorial path traitorous to the people.” The youth, the Buddhists, the students and other “truly revolutionary elements” had stopped the Cần Lao in their tracks and made clear the simple lesson that “the people will absolutely oppose anything that goes against the wishes of the people.”<sup>201</sup>

### “Anti-Americanism”

During the August riots, Western journalists pointed to “anti-Americanism” evidenced by slogans and demonstrations in opposition to American support for Khánh. Extreme interpretations of “anti-Americanism” during the Interregnum are found in the recent scholarship, particularly that of Mark Moyar’s *Triumph Forsaken* which painted the period as one overwhelmed by Buddhist-manipulated anti-American riots controlled by the singular Thích Trí Quang. According to Moyar, the monk was someone who “displayed anti-American and anti-Catholic sentiments so virulent and in unreal in nature that they could only have come from the

<sup>200</sup> If the Buddhists were not “truly” anticommunists, they relied on the anticommunist discourse in politics. Thích Tâm Châu—head of the Secular Institute and the Unified Buddhist Church—made regular anticommunist pronouncements which centered on the “atheism” of and disregard of religions by communism to justify Buddhist’s opposition of communist practices: “Tôi là người tin giáo lý nhân quả của Phật, hiểu rõ Phật Giáo ích lợi thật sự cho nhân sinh thế nào, nên đã lâu, tôi phủ nhận giải cấp đầu tranh của cộng sản và chủ trương của CS coi tôn giáo là đầu độc nhân dân,” (“Kêu gọi đoàn kết tôn giáo chống cộng sản vô thần,” *Chinh Luận*, July 7, 1964; “Biến Cố Quan Trọng Xảy ra trong Phật giáo Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 19, 1964). These declarations stood alongside their stated support for any government which “respect of all democratic freedoms, of which is the freedom of beliefs” (“Lập trường Phật Giáo,” *Chinh Luận*, July 6, 1964). Anticommunist statements, however, often come after allegations of communist infiltration and manipulation of the Buddhist Secular Institute or Church.

<sup>201</sup> L.C. “Một Bài Học Lịch Sử,” *Nội San Chinh Nghĩa*, 4(Nov. 1964), 15-19.

mind of either a maniac or a subversive or both.”<sup>202</sup> The work by Topmiller stood in contrast and, perhaps more accurately, interpreted the Buddhists’ “anti-Americanism” as a response to American diplomatic support for regimes in which Buddhists saw were undemocratic and authoritarian.<sup>203</sup> From what is presented in the previous section, this assessment can be expanded to much of the Republican civil society.

Following the McNamara visit in April—which promised increased *military* aid for the anticommunist war—South Vietnamese political discourse began discussing political, social, and economic costs that came with American aid. Not only was South Vietnam completely dependent on American funds to merely exist, this dependency came with it the threat of what would happen to South Vietnam if that funding is withdrawn—a fear pointed out clearly by Đặng Văn Sung in an editorial in April.<sup>204</sup> According to Sung, Vietnamese dependency was one which stems from the “underdevelopment” of South Vietnam. Thus, while the Americans promised aid to the military, no aid was promised to improve the economic well-being of the South Vietnamese nation nor was there any commitment to build democracy. American policy in South Vietnam, thus, stood in opposition to the Vietnamese understanding of what was necessary for *their* war: the development of South Vietnamese democracy and economy. Đặng Văn Sung writes: “because lacking a positive and reasonable emphasis on developing human resource, American aid does not help us actualize a democratic economy to fight communism but, instead, [this aid] is a source of abuse and corruption causing popular complaint and aid the propaganda of the communists.” For Đặng Văn Sung, what this prioritizing of the military meant for South Vietnam was that when it came to the “unification of all forces in the nation,” military measures were used rather than political ones—a measure that had borne little fruits, particularly in

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<sup>202</sup> Moyar, p. 366. There were multiple ways in which Moyar manipulated evidence to paint a horrid picture of the Buddhist militant movement and Thích Trí Quang. For one, Moyar argues that “Following the advice of Tri Quang, not that of Lodge, Khanh ordered the execution of Diem’s ailing brother [Ngô Đình Nhu]” (296). From what was presented above, the execution was most likely a result of the dominating narrative of “revolution” which over took the South following the November Revolution. As for the case of Đặng Sỹ, Moyar writes: “Pressure from Tri Quang induced Khanh to give life sentence of hard labor to Dang Sy” (295-296). This completely ignores the fact that many in the South Vietnamese society thought that Dang Sy would be executed, but it was perhaps due to Catholic agitation that a sentence of hard labor was given. And finally, Moyar fabricates the fact that “In order to appease Tri Quang, Khanh had the Army remove all of its Catholic chaplains” (295-296). The issue of removing Catholic chaplains emerged in late-December and January of 1965 and was a proposed issue to deal with how religion was affecting the army’s morale. This proposal was commuted in mid-February 1965 (“Độc Báo,” *Chinh Luận*, Feb. 20, 1965) by Nguyễn Khánh. The implication that Buddhists dominated the South Vietnamese army is also erroneous. By late February of 1965, the New York Times reported that there were only 50 Buddhist Chaplains in the Corps and would need an additional 200 Buddhist Chaplains to meet that of the Catholic’s number (50 MONKS IN ARMY HIGH IN INFLUENCE, *New York Times*, Mar 1, 1965). These argument are repeated in Mark Moyar, “Political Monks: The Militant Buddhist Movement during the Vietnam War,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 38(4): 2004, 749-784. For the most balanced and well-informed piece on Thích Trí Quang, see James McAllister, “‘Only Religions Count in Vietnam’: Thích Trí Quang and the Vietnam War,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 42(4): 2008, 751-782. The data I have presented concurs with McAllister’s argument that “The main factor that led to conflict between the Buddhist movement and the Johnson administration was Tri Quang’s insistence that the military regimes that followed Ngo Dinh Diem were hostile to Buddhism and incapable of leading the struggle against Communism to a successful conclusion.”

<sup>203</sup> Topmiller, 9-15.

<sup>204</sup> “Việt Nam càng ngày càng phụ thuộc vào Hoa Kỳ và trở nên một gánh nặng cho Hoa Kỳ... như thế Chính Phủ Hoa Kỳ có chủ đích chỉ để cho Việt Nam đứng vững một thời gian mà thôi. Nhìn kinh tế và tài chánh của Ai Lao, chỉ vài ngày sau Hoa Kỳ cắt viện trợ trước đây, ai mà không lo cho tương lai đất nước?” (“Hiện Tượng Chậm Tiến Trong Viện Trợ Mỹ,” *Chinh Luận*, Apr. 24, 1964).

underdeveloped countries. This was, for the author, was the “most expensive” means and only satisfies the demands of the state rather than the rest of society. Thus, what American aid should support should be a “political solution” which “nurtures and develops the ranks of the nation democratically to increase anticommunist mobilization and actualize all the intentions of the Revolution.”<sup>205</sup> His critique of the military emphasis in the anticommunist war was reflected in multiple other editorials held in newspapers like *Tự Do*.<sup>206</sup>

By August, much discontent had been raised in numerous editorials regarding the direction of the country. For much of the Republican civil society, the country was progressively reversing democratic progress. In June, voices in the press demanded civil rule rather than military rule calling military men to leave politics—which, by extension, meant a redirecting of priorities in the anticommunist war.<sup>207</sup> Amidst these calls for civil rather than military rule was a proposal from some 81 “intellectuals” to revise the Provisional Charter in effect since the November Coup.<sup>208</sup> In that proposal, the authors argue that the existing Charter does not dictate terms in office for the RMC, did not make clear the role of the Head of State, and does not guarantee any basic freedoms. They called for separation of power, civil liberties, and a civilian Premier. The proposal maintains the supreme role of the RMC in decision making but only to act as an intermediary body while it should be civilians who run the affairs of state. A new legislative body—replacing the Council of Sages—was also to be formed.<sup>209</sup>

A topic of much discussion,<sup>210</sup> the discourse surrounding the proposal tied civil rule to the autonomy of Vietnamese policies from the determinations made on the international stage. This was made explicit by Hương Minh—a contributor to *Chính Luận*. In a June editorial, the author pointedly pushed for reformation of the Charter as a way to avoid the “dependency” on foreign powers—not just the United States, but also the United Nations and “other international

<sup>205</sup> “Hiện Tượng Chậm Tiến Trong Viện Trợ Mỹ,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 24, 1964.

<sup>206</sup> Following the decision by the Khánh administration to use American aid to build new radio stations, *Tự Do* defines the “political solution” as one in which “the regime becomes attractive, the means that somehow the people acknowledge that they live and die by the regime” and mere propaganda—implying the radio stations—were not enough (Câu nói bất hủ,” *Tự Do*, June 28, 1964). The lengthy editorial by Mai Anh in *Tự Do* called for reinvestment in psychological warfare which entailed not merely propaganda, but rather active training and cultivation of cadres according to “the revolutionary morals and democratic and progressive ideals” as well as a sustained political “education” implemented in the populace (“Cứu Quốc Bằng Quân Đội/Vai Trò Chiến Tranh Tâm Lý,” *Tự Do*, July 5-15, 1964). Thê Vũ, another contributor to *Tự Do*, argued for an expanded psychological warfare program as well as transformation of economy and society in such a manner that it would attract allegiance to the nation (Chiến Thắng: 1 Vấn đề cố gắng và kiên nhẫn trường kỳ trong sự linh động,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964).

<sup>207</sup> Nguyễn Hữu Phiếm, “Quân Nhân và Chính Trị,” *Chính Luận*, June 4, 1964; “Nhân Bản Đề nghị một hiến ước lâm thời mới cần định rõ vai trò chính trị của quân đội,” *Chính Luận*, June 6, 1964.

<sup>208</sup> “Đề Nghị Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch HĐQTCM kiêm thủ tướng Chính Phủ Ban Hành Hiến Chương Lâm Thời,” *Chính Luận*, June 5, 1964. The only major change came on February 7<sup>th</sup> following the January Coup: any political actions by the Head of State (Đương Văn Minh) needed to be verified by the Chairman of the RMC (Nguyễn Khánh).  
<sup>209</sup> 81 Nhà Trí Thức, Thương Gia, Công Nhân Đề Nghị: Ban Hành Hiến Chương Lâm Thời,” *Tự Do*, June 6, 1964.

<sup>210</sup> The proposal was initially taken seriously by Khánh (“TT Nguyễn Khánh tiếp các chính khách thuộc nhóm đề nghị ‘Hiến Chương Lâm Thời,’” *Chính Luận*, June 10, 1964) and enjoyed support from multiple components of society (“Hội Đồng Quân Đội Cách Mạng và Chính Phủ Nên Cứu Xét Đề Nghị ‘Ban Hành Một Hiến Chương Lâm Thời’” *Tự Do*, June 9, 1964; “Nhân Bản Đề nghị Một Hiến Ước Lâm Thời Mới,” *Chính Luận*, June 6, 1964). Beyond these newspapers, the proposal was accepted by Khối Xã Hội Dân Chủ which laid out 3 purposes for its organization: 1) convene the National Assembly, 2) revise the Provisional Constitution, and 3) establish a “truly revolutionary administration.” They had also called for a civil administration to replace the military one, and a separation of power between the Head of State and the Chairman of the RMC.

conferences.” Indeed, “the fate of the people of Vietnam cannot be seen as a gambling chip in a contest for influence between power houses on the international chessboard.” To “rely” on international determinations to resolve the issues of Vietnam will result in “painful failures” and it must be the Vietnamese who decide on the “anticommunist program and develop the nation on the basis of independence, outside the influence of foreign powers”—a program that, by August, was envisioned less with military emphases than political ones. Aid, support, and political recognition by the outside must only be the “means to enact *our* program and cannot be seen as the *condition* which forces us in any way.” In an implicit critique of American policy, the author pointed out that the national leadership must have the “confidence” of the people and cannot be in accordance to the “arrangement or agreement of foreign powers, even if that foreign power is an ally.” This was a matter of political dependency and, “although we must stand in the ranks of the Free World and need the support of allies,” the Vietnamese people cannot “completely depend” on this support and must craft their nation themselves.<sup>211</sup>

*Xây Dựng*, as well, was not immune to regular critiques of American policy. In June, *Xây Dựng* critiqued American seeming drift towards negotiated settlement and the possibility of a second Geneva Conference to resolve the conflict in Vietnam. As argued, “In an [international] conference people will have expectations, will give way, will bargain and, if need be, there will be sacrifices to arrive at a resolution then who will bear that sacrifice?” For *Xây Dựng*, “as everyone already know, it will surely not be Britain, America, France, or the communists.” It will be the Vietnamese people who will bear the brunt of the sacrifices to achieve that resolution.<sup>212</sup> Like much of the Republican civil society, *Xây Dựng* maintains that “America completely does not have responsibility for any developments regarding the internal matters of Vietnam.”<sup>213</sup> *Xây Dựng* decried the role of the American 1964 elections in determining the South Vietnamese future and pointed to the country’s lack of self-determination: “How can VN avoid disadvantages if it...does not have full power to determine its own fate?”<sup>214</sup> And a month prior to the protests, as if issuing an ominous warning, *Xây Dựng* argued that if America should have any impact on Vietnamese internal politics, it should be to “help Vietnam in a limited manner...[to] reinforce the unity of our people...But, if in helping Vietnam to stabilize its conditions, American only focus on an individual or an organization...then the result will not be favorable and will be unable to avoid misinterpretation from the people of Vietnam regarding American goodwill.”<sup>215</sup>

American seemingly unconditional support for Khánh throughout was interpreted through this paradigm of how the Vietnamese were understanding *their* war. Indeed, it was highly unlikely

<sup>211</sup> Hương Minh, “Từ Bản Đề Nghị HCLT Đến Vấn Đề Nhân dân VN tự tạo vai trò chủ động trong việc diệt cộng và kiến quốc,” *Chính Luận*, June 19, 1964.

<sup>212</sup> “Viễn tượng tui nhục của một hội nghị Geneve thứ 2 đã chập chờn trước mắt,” *Xây Dựng*, June 8, 1964.

<sup>213</sup> “Hãy thẳng thắn nhìn nhận những thực trạng,” *Xây Dựng*, July 2, 1964.

<sup>214</sup> “Cớ Những biện pháp nào đôi phó?” *Xây Dựng*, July 16, 1964.

<sup>215</sup> “Cần Chấm dứt sự ngộ nhận đáng tiếc,” *Xây Dựng*, July 6, 1964. In another piece, the newspaper argued that Khánh cannot just rely on American support and ignore domestic problems (“Thái độ im lặng của chính phủ sẽ không giải quyết được gì cả,” *Xây Dựng*, July 7, 1964; in another editorial, *Xây Dựng* argued that American policy was to not interfere in Vietnamese domestic politics but yet changed the words of Nguyễn Khánh when it came to the Northward March by declaring that America and Vietnam did not disagree on this issue (“Những hiện tượng kỳ lạ trong chính sách Mỹ tại Việt Nam,” *Xây Dựng*, July 31, 1964. The newspaper also differentiated between what was meant as “victory” for the Americans and what “victory” meant for South Vietnam (“Hãy chấm dứt mọi thái độ chính sách bất nhất,” *Xây Dựng*, Sep. 4, 1964).

that Khánh would have remained in power for so long as he did without active American support. That support was seen largely for military aspects of the anticommunist war rather than “political” concerns such as democracy and economic viability. Moreover, that support was for an authoritarian regime that went against the democratic promise of the November Revolution. Perhaps it was most neatly summarized by that “maniac or subversive” Thích Trí Quang following the ouster of the Hương administration in January of 1965—an ouster which was preceded by riots which trashed the USIS Library in Huế and protests in front of the US Embassy in Saigon. Emerging from a 7-day fast in protest of the Hương administration, the Reverend gave an interview to English-language newspapers in Saigon arguing that Buddhists were not anti-American but resented “American misunderstanding” of Vietnam. Indeed, “Buddhists think that America’s support for Mr. Hương’s policy is not only detrimental to the Vietnamese people, but also to American goodwill here...[and] when people hate Mr. Hương, anyone who supported him inevitably received a share of that hate.”<sup>216</sup> While Moyar would argue that such an interview only demonstrates the manipulative duplicity of the monk, Thích Trí Quang’s interpretation of Buddhist’s demands clearly resonated with a dominating discourse manifesting in the Republic.

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<sup>216</sup> Buddhist Leader Denies Any Anti-Americanism, *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 29, 1965; “Thượng Tọa Thích Trí Quang Tuyên Bố: Không Chống Mỹ và sẽ cử một phái đoàn gặp Đại Sứ Taylor,” *Tự Do*, Jan. 30, 1965.

CHAPTER 8: THE ERA OF CIVILIAN RULE

*The People's National Salvation Council  
and the Political Emergence of Vietnamese Conservatism*

Trần Văn Hương—the incumbent governor of Saigon—ascended to the position of Premier after some 2-months of increasing social, political, and national peril. From the end of August until the 30<sup>th</sup> of October when Hương took office, the political-military conditions of South Vietnam turned for the worse. Politically, the Vũng Tàu Charter may have been scrapped, but the aftermath resulted in the purging of Đại Việt influences from the South Vietnamese administration and military. Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn—the leader of the Đại Việt—had stood with the students and against Khánh during the August riots. The purge of the Đại Việt, however, resulted in an attempted coup on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September which further factionalized the Republican Armed Forces. Khánh emerged physically unscathed by the bloodless assault, but, as Lâm Vĩnh Thế argues, he was now beholden to the growing influence of a cohort of young military officers—the “Young Turks”—led by the Air Commodore Nguyễn Cao Kỳ and the Commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Corp, Nguyễn Chánh Thi—who had saved him from the coup. Outside of this shift in the political landscape, a worker’s strike unfolded which effectively shut down the capitol’s transportation, electrical, and water supplies for 2 days. The Central Highlands had become increasingly perilous. A Montagnard rebellion surged in the Central Highlands and was finally put down with the active support of the US military. The guerrilla insurgency had expanded in the Central Region, overtaking various provinces effectively isolating urban centers from the rural countryside.

Certain achievements, however, had been made. The High National Council (HNC) had been formed in late September headed by Dương Văn Minh composed of South Vietnamese notables—most of which, however, are quite aged. The Council drafted a new Provisional Charter which was made public on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. Despite minor criticisms of the Charter, it was praised for being “democratic” and provided a separation of powers between the military, the executive, judicial, and legislative branches. The HNC, as well, received initial support. It, for one, was composed of notables from diverse backgrounds, representing religious sects, the Buddhists, the Catholics, and multiple members of the Caravelle group.<sup>1</sup> For another, its efforts in quickly drafting the Provisional Charter had circumvented any allegations of “laggardness” once attributed to the civil administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ.

Phan Khắc Sửu—among the 18 who signed the Carravelle Manifesto and was imprisoned under the First Republic—was elected by the HNC to serve as the new Head of State and Sửu, in turn, nominated Hương to be the second civilian Premier since the collapse of the First Republic who was inaugurated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. For the most part, both Sửu and Hương were initially approved by religious organizations and the Armed Forces as well as receiving American recognition.<sup>2</sup> Delivering his Program of State to the HNC on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October,

<sup>1</sup> “VIETNAM CHARTER REPLACING KHANH IS DUE THIS WEEK,” *New York Times*, Oct 11, 1964;

<sup>2</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, delegations from Catholics, Buddhists, religious sects verified their support for the new administration and civilian rule (“Phái Đoàn Các tôn Giáo Yêu Cầu Thượng Hội Đồng Nhập Chính Sau 27-10,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 27, 1964; “NEW SAIGON CHIEF WELCOMED BY U.S.: RELIGIOUS GROUPS ALSO LAUD,” *New York Times*, Oct 26, 1964). In a press interview, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ—leader of the increasingly powerful Young Turks—expressed that his military clique “entirely supports the civil government of Phan Khắc Sửu...[and] have met with the Head of State twice to verify this commitment” (“Tin Tưởng ở Các Tướng Trẻ để gây đoàn kết trong quân đội và ủng hộ chính phủ dân sự,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 2, 1964). American approval early on, see “VIETNAMESE HAVE NEW



Hương, like other administrative leaders before him, emphasized a strong policy of anticommunism and anti-neutralism.<sup>3</sup> Structurally, the administration would decentralize to cope with the unconventional war while enhancing information apparatuses, counter-propaganda efforts, and the Chiêu Hồi Program. Shaped by recent events, the administration further seeks to “prioritize the rejuvenation<sup>4</sup> of civil servants and cadres, eliminate factionalism, corruption, and the pacifist spirit.” Economically, the administration will focus on domestic production, technologicalization and austerity to cope with the “underdevelopment” and “dependency” of the country. In terms of foreign policy, it will seek cooperation with its existing allies while holding a stricter stance to countries which espouses neutralist or communist ideas.<sup>5</sup>

While much of Hương’s program reflected that of the Khánh administration—and much was even borrowed from the political-economic agendas of the First Republic—the Hương administration stands apart from every other previous administration by affirming that it will seek the “separation of politics” from religion and academia. Minor as this may seem, this “separation” agenda of Trần Văn Hương actually reflected a significant shift in the discourse of “revolution” which had continued to dominate South Vietnamese political discussions since November of 1963. That statement by Hương was the culminating consequence of political insurrection that had rocked the Republic since the August riots.

In seeking that “separation,” the Hương administration promised basic civil liberties but citizens “must respect the rights of others and cannot bring harm to national security.”<sup>6</sup> Such a program was “realistic and non-demagogic [in that it does not] provide empty promises.” The issue of “demagogy,” civil liberties within confines, and measured democracy were not matters seen heavily reflected in the Buddhist discourse on revolution. Rather these matters were emphasized regularly in the editorials found in *Xây Dựng*.<sup>7</sup> After all, it was Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh himself who declared during the Catholic demonstrations in June that “a basic error in of the state today is its conflation of democracy and demagogy.”<sup>8</sup> The idea to “separate” politics from academia and religions was an extension of the particular conception of the “democratic revolution” that was originally prevalent amongst the Catholics.

Like many “new” ideas of the period, this desire to “separate” politics from religion and academia did not begin with the Hương administration but was fostered in the Republican civil society following the riots in August and the chaos of subsequent months. The tumultuous period from the scrapping of the Vũng Tàu Charter in late August to the inauguration of the Trần Văn Hương administration saw a growing disillusionment within the press, student groups, and religious organizations—even from Buddhist leaders—of the chaotic and human toll that came

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PRESIDENT: PHAN KHAC SUU TAKES POST ON CONDITION,” *The Sun*, Oct 26, 1964 and “Chính Phủ Mỹ sẽ triệt để ủng hộ Chính Phủ Trần Văn Hương,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 6, 1964.

<sup>3</sup> As the many provisional charters before, the emphasis when it came to internal affairs as “victory over communism and building the country, bring back...prosperity for the people.”

<sup>4</sup> *trẻ trung hóa* literally— ‘youthenization’

<sup>5</sup> “Thủ Tướng Hương đã trình bày trước Thượng Hội Đồng,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 3, 1964; “Tân Thủ Tướng Trần Văn Hương Trình Bày Chương Trình Hoạt Động,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 3, 1964; “New Viet Premier's Speech Promises ‘Tough Policy,’” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution*, Nov 1, 1964.

<sup>6</sup> “Thủ Tướng Hương đã trình bày trước Thượng Hội Đồng,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 3, 1964

<sup>7</sup> Example: see “Ý Kiến Chúng Tôi: Đã đến lúc không thể lùi bước được nữa,” *Xây Dựng*, Aug. 11, 1964.

<sup>8</sup> As a reminder of the Catholic demonstrations in June of 1964, this argument came during the point of heightened Catholic mobilization against the “unfair” trial of Đặng Sỹ and opposition to the nature of the “democratic revolution” since the collapse of the First Republic (“Tuyên Ngôn của Khối Công Giáo Việt Nam,” *Xây Dựng*, Jun. 9-10, 1964).

with the “Revolution.” By November, the emphasis was no longer simply “True Democracy and Freedom” as it was in January of 1964. The “democratic revolution” had to be within confines of security and stability. What was desired was a strong administration capable of effectively conducting the anticommunist war and yet was avowed to the promises of revolutionary and democracy. If the events from August to November were not enough, the social upsurge that came after Hương’s inauguration only further reinforced this trend toward political stability and a growing weariness with regime change and turmoil.

The event which forced this shift in the conception of the political role of religions and academia was the rise of the People’s National Salvation Council (PNSC). This event amplified the image of “demagogy” as a disastrous consequence of restrained democratic privileges. That disaster—once felt only primarily within Catholic communities which faced the brunt of anti-Cần Lao sentiments—became wider social issues as Central Vietnam erupted in political chaos, faced a crisis of authority, and the seizure of various Central provinces by communist guerrillas in the months of September and October.

In many ways, the emergence of the PNSC was a radical product of the “anti-authoritarian,” “old versus new,” “True Democracy and Freedom” discourse that had emerged after the November Revolution. In the Vietnamese Central region—particularly the ancient dynastic capitol Huế—that discourse took on radical overtones, heavily influenced by the Thích Trí Quang who led the militant faction of the Unified Buddhist Church.<sup>9</sup> Rarely discussed in the existing literature,<sup>10</sup> the creation of the PNSC on August 28<sup>th</sup> led to a region-wide movement which led to a crisis of local authority throughout the region. Conjoined with the Montagnard uprising in the Highlands, communist operatives in the Central region penetrated a virtual political and military vacuum taking over multiple provinces and threatening Central cities. Political analyses of these events stemming from Saigon depicted the movement, at the very worst, as communist-led or communist-infiltrated or unwittingly creating a crisis which the communist exploited, at the very best.

From Huế, the deeply influential journal *Lập Trường* had a different story to tell. It had early on had sided with the PNSC—its own Chief Editor, a member.<sup>11</sup> For *Lập Trường*, the

<sup>9</sup> *Lập Trường* was produced in Huế—which was historically the center of ideological leadership in Central Vietnam. As Hương Thi Diu Nguyen points out, it had a following reaching down to the Cà Mau peninsula as well as in Saigon and abroad. The journal “clearly supported the Buddhist mobilization and its leaders, spending pages on the letters of Ven. Thích Trí Quang” (234-236).

<sup>10</sup> The paramount works which should have discussed the phenomenon—Hương Thi Diu Nguyen’s dissertation on the social history of Huế (1954-1967) and Robert Topmiller’s *The Lotus Unleashed*—completely ignored the PNSC. The most recent scholarly inclusion of the PNSC was in Moyar which had a paragraph ultimately dismissing the movement as being “strongly suspected” of having ties to the communist insurgency. Indeed, most reports from the time—both Vietnamese and English—reported similarly. However, rather than digging into whether the movement was “communist” or “nationalist”—a question deeply marred with political intents—this section will situate the PNSC in the ideological history of South Vietnam.

<sup>11</sup> Tôn Thất Hạnh—a member of PNSC-Huế and the Chief Editor of *Lập Trường*—was selected along with Lê Khắc Quyến to join the HNC. The American press—particularly Peter Grose, a journalist for the *New York Times*—was deeply critical of the journal and deemed it to be neutralist and anti-American (Peril Seen in Vietnam Buddhist Drive, *New York Times*, Jun 9, 1964). Responding to these allegations, the journal carefully laid out its opposition to not American presence in Vietnam, but rather American foreign policy of supporting “authoritarian” leaders. Furthermore, its 14<sup>th</sup> issue was dedicated to combatting allegations of its neutralist sympathies. Expressing the familiar narrative of anti-neutralism, the journal argued that neutralism would open the doors for communist domination of South Vietnam and expressly rejected the recognition of Hà Nội as a legitimate government nor a cooperation with communist forces

PNSC was an anti-authoritarian, grassroots organization that sought to successfully enact the promises of the November Revolution. Through the journal—which effectively became the organization’s mouthpiece—the PNSC drew upon existing sentiments of anti-authoritarianism following the Vũng Tàu Charter to organize a movement aimed at creating a “clean and revolutionary administration that had the confidence of the people to complete the mission of anticommunism, anti-neutralism, national salvation, and creation of a foundation for true democracy for the Vietnamese Fatherland.”<sup>12</sup> For the journal, the PNSC represented “the people” who had grown disillusioned with the failures of national leaders to learn from the revolution undergoing since November of 1963. As “children of the old regime,” these leaders—rather than enacting the promises of the November Revolution—had “copied each other to recrudescence authoritarianism under a new and novel form.”<sup>13</sup> Led by a number of professors from the University of Huế, the movement organized around opposition to not only Khánh, but also any administration appointed by Khánh. For the Huế professors, all South Vietnamese administrations since January were derived from the same authoritarian person and thus did not deserve the confidence of the people.<sup>14</sup>

Alongside opposing any semblance of authoritarianism, the movement pointed blame at America which must “take responsibility...because Americans unconditionally aided” these authoritarians. The failures of Khánh, the journal argued, was the failure of a policy—a “policy which refused to accept the force of Vietnamese people as essential...thus America must review their policy of aid to aid the Vietnamese people...not those individuals that America had put forward and forced the people of Vietnam to accept.” As argued, any American policy that failed to recognize the desires of the Vietnamese people will ultimately fail because, “in the anticommunist policy to protect Freedom and Democracy” of the Vietnamese people, it is only the government that had the confidence of the Vietnamese people that “deserves the support of America.”<sup>15</sup> Reflective of the broader criticisms of American policy in Vietnam, the movement argued that “only a civilian government which enjoys the confidence of the entire people is capable of winning” the anticommunist war.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, in the aftermath of violent clashes between Buddhist and Catholic forces during August Riots, *Lập Trường* critiqued Western

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through joint government. In an article responding to Grose, the journal adamantly stated its anti-De Gaulle and anti-neutralist stance and argued that *Lập Trường* could never be neutralist because the journal is the voice of the people. Its commentaries also occasionally expressed the familiar rejection of the Geneva Accords or any internationally-based determination on South Vietnam (“Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 9, 16), bounded anticommunism and democracy (“Lập Trường Phỏng Vấn Chuẩn Tướng Nguyễn Chánh Thi,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 23, p. 4), joined the call for the Northward March (“Xã Thuyết,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 9, p. 1, 3), and, at least early on, saw Vietnamese and American fates interwoven within the anticommunist war (Cao Lang, “Việt Nam và Hoa Kỳ,” *Lập Trường*, Mar. 28, 1964, Is. 2, p. 3, 14).

<sup>12</sup> “Tuyên Cáo của Hội Đồng Nhân Dân Cứu Quốc,” *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, front cover.

<sup>14</sup> “Thông Cáo Số 4,” and “Khánh=Oánh=Khánh,” *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, 4-6

<sup>15</sup> *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, front cover.

<sup>16</sup> “Tuyên Ngôn của Giáo Chức Viện Đại Học Huế,” *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, 6; trans. Into English “Manifesto of Hue University Teach Staff” which was “respectfully addressed to the US Government and Congress.”

reports on the “holy war”<sup>17</sup> as an “exploitation” of Vietnamese lives for the upcoming and “faraway American election” in November.<sup>18</sup>

In practice, however, the PNSC aimed their mobilization against the “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party” which had received “the nourishment and protection” of the existing administration.<sup>19</sup> Reports stemming from Saigon in general newspapers pointed to the attacks and threats against suspected Cần Lao members and civil servants once belonging to the former regime. PNSC activists argued that the movement was cleansing the “vestiges” of the former regime—a task at which the apparently state had failed to achieve. Following Huế, cities like Qui Nhon (Sept. 10),<sup>20</sup> Đà Nẵng (Sept. 9),<sup>21</sup> and Nha Trang (Sept. 13)<sup>22</sup> set up People’s Councils to conduct “revolution” by demanding local authorities to hand over those deemed to be “vestiges of the Can Lao Party” to face the retribution of the people. PNSC presence was cited in Pleiku, Quảng Tín, and the surrounding areas of Huế.<sup>23</sup> These People’s Councils were largely led by local university faculty who recruited their students to join in excising the “vestiges.” Student demonstrators overtook radio stations, local police and security centers, and orchestrated virtual state takeovers, holding some urban centers for several days.<sup>24</sup> Reports on the events cited the flight of students and families who refused to participate in the movement.

Despite being inaugurated in late August, the movement did not come into the political consciousness of the Saigon residents until mid-September. In the early days of September, delegations were sent from Huế to various Central cities such as Qui Nhon. In Qui Nhon, the PNSC representative from Huế contacted the principal of a local middle school and coopted

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<sup>17</sup> “Holy war,” “religious riots,” or “religious war” were a regularly used tropes by Western observers to describe the clashes which erupted after Khanh scrapped the Vũng Tàu Charter and the RMC convened a meeting to elect a new national leader. At least 1 report implied that Buddhists were “saturated with the communist spirit” (The Foreign Press: Disaster Approaches in South Vietnam,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1964). Others argued that the riot “reflected old antagonism, political and religious, between Vietnamese Buddhists and Roman Catholics,” (“Saigon Torn by Religious Riots; 8 Die,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1964). In the context of these riots, American political analysis focused less on the demands of the protestors than whether the “war on reds” was “unhurt” or prioritized (“War on Reds seen unhurt: US Aides Cite Vietnam Alarm, Then Express New Hope,” *The Sun*, Aug. 29, 1964; “Saigon Unit Stalled on Khanh Plan,” *The Sun*, Aug. 27, 1964). Examples include: “Four Hospital Patients Killed by Viet Rioters,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 27, 1964; “Religious Riots Greets New Viet Junta,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 28, 1964; “Victims Beheaded in Frenzied Rioting: Catholic, Buddhist Mob War in Saigon,” *Boston Globe*, Aug. 28, 1964; “Saigon Torn by Religious Riots; 8 Die,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 28, 1964; “Gen. Khanh in new Vietnam triumvirate: Day of Fighting in Saigon Streets,” *The Guardian*, Aug. 28, 1964.

<sup>18</sup> “Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, 8. The argument that the anticommunist war or Vietnam was exploited for American politics was not new by August of 1964. One commentary by *Lập Trường* in July had already argued that “American policy is always by the Americans and for the Americans: the Americans are realists. They cannot be idealists like us. Thus, we must be as realist as the Americans,” “Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, is. 19, July 25, 1964, 16. A direct reference to the Vietnamese anticommunist war being at the mercy of American elections, surprisingly, could be found in a July commentary by *Xây Dựng*—the Catholic newspaper “Ý Kiến Chúng Tôi: Có Những Biện Pháp Nào Đối Phó?” *Xây Dựng*, July 16, 1964.

<sup>19</sup> “Cuộc Tranh Đấu của Giáo Chức Viện Đại Học,” *Lập Trường*, is. 23, Aug. 29, 1964, 6; *Lập Trường*, at one point, had intertwined anticommunism with anti-Cần Lao and anti-authoritarianism (“Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, Sep. 5, 1964, Is. 24, p. 16; Nguyễn Tâm, “Chính Thê Trương Lai,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 24, p. 4).

<sup>20</sup> “Thiên Phóng sự điều tra tại chỗ qui nhon: con sôi máu ghê gớm chưa từng thấy,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 1, 1964.

<sup>21</sup> “Hội Đòng Nhân Dân Cứu Quốc Thành Phố Đà Nẵng,” *Tự Do*, Sept. 14, 1964.

<sup>22</sup> “Học Sinh Sinh Viên Nha Trang Bãi Khóa, Biểu Tình,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 23, 1964.

<sup>23</sup> “Các Tỉnh Lục Tục Tổ Chức Phong Trào Than Toán Cần Lao,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 29, 1964.

<sup>24</sup> “Thanh Niên sinh viên học sinh Qui Nhon biểu tình áp ðòa dư ðảng cần lao,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 23, 1964.

faculty to the PNSC cause. Following the arrival of these delegations, a student organization taking on the label “Student Struggle Force” was created and served as the vanguard to seek out “Cần Lao” members. These “Struggle Forces” either directly contact local authorities and demanding documented list of existing Cần Lao members—as in Nha Trang<sup>25</sup>—or engaged haphazardly, targeting those who resisted or who were popularly known to had been part of the “old” regime—as in Qui Nhơn.<sup>26</sup> The movement overtook much of the Central region and, at least initially, the PNSC had popular support.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, following the demonstrations against authoritarianism during the August riots, much of the Central region was mobilized and the PNSC was seen as an extension of student “righteous” demands for democracy and civil rule.<sup>28</sup> However, negative attention began turning against the PNSC on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September. In a power move in Huế, the PNSC faculty sought to remove Fr. Cao Văn Luận from his position as Dean of the University argued that his presence stalled the progress of the revolution.<sup>29</sup> Two days later, Lê Khắc Quyến met with Dương Văn Minh and was officially invited to join the HNC, ultimately turning national attention towards the movement.<sup>30</sup>

Student resistance to the PNSC began in Huế with a student-faculty conference on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September in which the Student Union protested the removal of Cao Văn Luận citing his “contributions” to the Buddhist community during the protests in 1963. Indeed, the priest was amongst the few Catholics who stood on the side of Buddhist opposition and was removed from his position by the Diệm administration and only returned after the collapse of the First Republic in November.<sup>31</sup> The power grab by Lê Khắc Quyến and PNSC-Huế faculty was tactically thought out. During the priest’s trip to Saigon, a telegram was sent from Huế to the Dean requesting that he step down from his position and inform the Education Ministry of his resignation. It further advised the dean to not return to Huế.<sup>32</sup> Following news of student resistance in Huế, other student and civil organizations began mobilizing a counter-offensive in support of Huế students to “remove politics from academia.” On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, the two main student unions in Saigon declared their support for the Huế students’ opposition to “politics in academia” and formed the “Student Force to Protect Pure Education.”<sup>33</sup> In early October

<sup>25</sup> “Học Sinh Sinh Viên Nha Trang Bãi Khóa, Biểu Tình,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 23, 1964.

<sup>26</sup> “Thiên Phóng sự điều tra tại chỗ qui nhơn: con sôi máu ghê gớm chưa từng thấy,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 1, 1964.

<sup>27</sup> “Dân Chúng Phan Rang Đòi Hội Đồng NDCQ Thanh Toán Tiền Quyên và thôi sách động học sinh,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 14, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> Students in a later press conference argued that PNSC emerged at an “opportune” time: “Sinh Viên Đả Đảo Hội Đồng Nhân Dân Cứu Quốc Huế,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 10, 1964; Examples of early support: “Thiên Phóng sự điều tra tại chỗ qui nhơn: con sôi máu ghê gớm chưa từng thấy,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 1, 1964; “Học Sinh Sinh Viên Nha Trang Bãi Khóa, Biểu Tình,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 23, 1964; The PNSC could not keep its promises: “Thanh Niên Tiền Đạo và Thanh niên thống nhất tố cáo: BS QUYẾN và GS Hanh là tâm binh phong cho Cộng Sản ả núp,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 20, 1964.

<sup>29</sup> “Những bất đồng ý kiến giữa Giáo sư và sinh viên Huế,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 23, 1964.

<sup>30</sup> “TT Dương Văn Minh Hội Đàm Với Phái Đoàn HNĐCQ Huế,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 21, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> “Những bất đồng ý kiến giữa Giáo sư và sinh viên Huế,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 23, 1964.

<sup>32</sup> “Diễn Văn yêu cầu LM Cao V Luận từ chức viện trưởng Viện Đại Học Huế,” *Xây Dựng*, Sep. 18, 1964.

<sup>33</sup> “Một số sinh viên học sinh họp mít tinh đòi đưa chính trị ra ngoài học đường,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 28, 1964; “Quyết Nghị của Hội Đồng chỉ đạo sinh viên học sinh sài gòn về cuộc tranh đấu của sinh viên Huế,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 29, 1964.

sympathy protests erupted in Long Khánh, Biên Hòa, and Nha Trang.<sup>34</sup> An attempt to create a PNSC in Đà Lạt on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October was adamantly stopped by residents.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from student opposition, increasing reports on chaos, violence, and forced participation by PNSCs in the Central region turned popular opinion in the press against the organization. *Chính Luận* called upon the HNC to take firm actions against the PNSC.<sup>36</sup> *Tự Do*—which had taken a neutral interest in the organization until mid-September—began publishing editorials, letters, and commentaries protesting the PNSC and calling for “protecting education” and “removal of politics from academia.”<sup>37</sup> The fate of the PNSC, however, was sealed not simply by reports of “revolutionary” violence, but also the adjacent political turmoil erupting in late September. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September, the Montagnard rebelled—which was later interpreted as an attempt to cut off the Central region from the South and force Vietnam to neutralize;<sup>38</sup> on the 21<sup>st</sup>, the capitol’s Labor Union went on strike; and following the PNSC emergence in several central regions, communist activities proliferated. Quảng Trị was attacked by guerrilla forces on the 20<sup>th</sup> which began a spree of guerrilla assault in major Central and Southern districts. Thừa Thiên—where Huế was the provincial seat—was attacked on the 21<sup>st</sup>.<sup>39</sup> To make matters worse, in Bình Định, a 5000-man protest erupted calling for neutralism and the ejection of American troops from Vietnam forcing the region to be placed under martial law after clashes with security forces; relationship to the PNSC, however, was undetermined.<sup>40</sup>

Within this context, the broader political discourse turned against the PNSC movement, labeling it either communist-led, communist-inspired, communist-infiltrated, or neutralist. The adamancy against the PNSC was led—in large part—by the VNQDD from Quảng Ngãi which cited direct witnessing of PNSC atrocities. During a press conference on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, the organization warned that, immediately following the PNSC formation in the province, two-thirds of Quảng Ngãi had fallen into communist hands. PNSC membership was condemned as being composed of communists and corrupt members of the old regime and they seized power by

<sup>34</sup> “Biểu tình tại quận xuân lộc đòi đưa chính trị ra khỏi học đường,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 5, 1964; “Biểu tình tạ gia đình, biên hòa đòi chính trị rời khỏi học đường,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 7, 1964; “Sinh Viên Học Sinh Nha trang đòi tách rời chính trị khỏi học đường,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 8, 1964. See also Đà Lạt: “Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Đà Lạt Chống mọi âm mưu bất chính lợi dụng sinh viên học sinh làm bàn đạp,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 7, 1964. Citizens opposition to PNSC: “Một Nhóm công dân đòi hỏi chính quyền áp dụng các biện pháp gấp rút,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 10, 1964.

<sup>35</sup> “Một nhóm người ở Đà Lạt cũng mưu toan lập ‘Hội đồng cứu quốc,’” *Chính Luận* Oct. 6, 1964.

<sup>36</sup> Đặng Văn Sung, “Thượng Hội Đồng Quốc gia Chưa Nhật Thực Được Hết Các Nhiệm Vụ,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 5, 1964; *Chính Luận* editorial on protecting “pure education”: “Diễn Đàn: Cần phải bảo vệ nền giáo dục thuần túy,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 8, 1964

<sup>37</sup> “Thư Ngõ của LLSVHSBVGDTT Gửi Quý Vị Phụ Huynh Học Sinh,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 2, 1964; “Tinh Thần Quốc Gia còn mạnh,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 6, 1964; “Việc Qui Nhơn Chưa Hết,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 6, 1964; “Ý Kiến bạn đọc: Vấn đề ‘quốc dân đại hội?’ Sinh viên và học sinh,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 9, 1964. “Bạn đọc cho biết: cảnh người dân đông hà dưới chế độ hội đồng nhân dân cứu quốc,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 17, 1964;

<sup>38</sup> “Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Hợp Bóa Kêu gọi thành lập mặt trận đoàn kết chống cộng,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 2, 1964

<sup>39</sup> List of attacks on central provinces in late September: “Bộ Quốc Phòng Cho Biết: VC Không Vượt Qua Khu Phi Chiến,” *Tự Do*, Sep. 25, 1964; Attack on Quảng Ngãi: “VC thất bại nặng nề tại Quảng Ngãi” *Tự Do*, Sep. 18, 1964; attacks on first week of October: “Một Chiến Thuật man rợ của Cộng Sản tại Quảng Ngãi Bị Phục Kích Không lối thoát,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 7, 1964.

<sup>40</sup> “Biểu tình đòi thanh toán dư đảng cần lao được chuyển thành võ trang nổi loạn ở Bình Định,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 30, 1964; Another protest against the war came in Biên Hòa: “VC Cưỡng Bức 50 Phụ Nữ Biên Hòa Biểu Tình Yêu Cầu Quân Đội Đùng Bắn Súng Đùng Thả Bom,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 8, 1964; *Tự Do*, in an editorial stated that such cries were that of communists, neutralists, and their henchmen—not that of the Vietnamese people: “Thư ngõ kính gửi đại sứ M. Taylor, Chính Phủ và Nhân Dân Hòa Kỳ,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 5, 1964.

labeling anyone who disagreed with them as “Cần Lao” thus justifying violence against the person.<sup>41</sup>

The Student Union in Saigon concurred arguing that such chaos could have been avoided if there was a government policy on the Cần Lao with clear cut categorization of who should be punished and who should not. Because of the lack of such a policy, people had taken retribution against the old regime into their own hands.<sup>42</sup> The students argued that the PNSC opportunistically grew out of the mobilization following the Vũng Tàu Charter protests which had demanded democratic representation and civil rule but with the formation of the HNC, the PNSC no longer had a reason to exist.<sup>43</sup> According to students, the PNSC exploited the “enthusiasm” of students and civilians to seize power and cause chaos. Students charged that PNSC leaders—like Lê Khắc Quyến—had contact with communist agents, were taking communist orders, or were former Cần Lao members.<sup>44</sup> Students used the anti-authoritarian message of the PNSC against them, deeming the PNSC faculty of being “authoritarians” who stifled dissent, monopolized nationalism, and threatened those who disagreed with violence and demanded that Lê Khắc Quyến be removed from the HNC. The students—avowed to anticommunism, anti-neutralism, and anti-Cần Lao—called for the formation of a “unified anticommunist front” and argued that “the extermination of the Cần Lao must go hand in hand with the extermination of the communists.”<sup>45</sup>

Political opposition to the PNSC in Saigon resulted in a “political conference” on the 7<sup>th</sup> of October attended by some 200 leading politicians and notables representing various nationalist parties and religious organizations. Dr. Hoàng Cơ Bình—a leader of the Social Democrats—presided over the conference which effectively declared Lê Khắc Quyến a “henchman” of the communist guerrillas. Hoàng Cơ Bình rejected Lê Khắc Quyến’s presence in the HNC arguing that, with the head of the PNSC as member of the governmental body, one cannot “trust Dr. Quyến to fight communism and fight neutralism.” The conference board called upon the PNSC

<sup>41</sup> “Việt Cộng Chiếm 2 Phần 3 Quảng Ngãi,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 2, 1964; “Tình đảng bộ vnqđđ vào thủ đồ báo nguy: Quảng Ngãi sắp lọt vào tay CS,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 2, 1964.

<sup>42</sup> The possibility of populist violence against former Cần Lao members had been warned by the Buddhist Secular Institute as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> of September if the government did adopt a “resolute attitude with the Can Lao.” (“Viện Hóa Đạo Sau Biến Cố 13-9,” *Chính Luận*, Sept. 16, 1964); Taking the Reverend’s demands as warning, Đặng Văn Sung, early on, argued that the excision of the Can Lao from all prominent positions must be an issue addressed by the HNC. If not, the author argues, those who were the people, once the victims of the Can Lao, will become victims of the movement to excise the Can Lao (“Nhân vụ lợi dụng phong trào thanh toán Cần Lao để nổi loạn ở Qui Nhơn, đặt vấn đề với THĐQG,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 1, 1964).

<sup>43</sup> “Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Hợp Bó Kêu Gọi Thành lập Mặt Trận Đoàn kết chống cộng,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 2, 1964; “Sinh Viên Đả đảo Hội Đồng Nhân Dân Cứu Quốc Huế,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 6, 1964.

<sup>44</sup> One of the leading student groups in Saigon—the Student Leadership Council—however, refused to label the PNSC as communist—because “to do so is to ‘cap’ *chụp mũ* them”—but “these councils had made it very beneficial for the communists [because] as they advance, the communists advance, they took it to the streets, the communists took it to the streets.” “Chụp Mũ” means to attribute an organization or an individual with a politically negative association (such as communist or neutralist) the intent to wrongly condemn them.

<sup>45</sup> “Bức Thư Ngỏ của Hội Ái Hữu Sinh Viên Học Sinh Tỉnh Bình Định gửi sinh viên học sinh và đồng bào trong tỉnh,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 7, 1964; “Hội Đồng Chi Đạo Sinh Viên Học Sinh Sài Gòn Hội thảo và lên án các hội đồng nhân dân cwusu quốc ở miền trung,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 6, 1964; “Hội Đồng Chi Đạo Sinh Viên Học Sinh Sài Gòn Cục Lực Phản Đối Độc Tài lợi dụng dnah nghĩa học sinh, sinh viên, đại học,” *Chính Luận*, Sept. 30 1964; “Một Lá thư không niềm giải thích lý do có cần lao và cộng sản trong ‘hội đồng cứu quốc’” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 8, 1964; “Thanh Niên Sinh Viên và Học Sinh yêu cầu BS Quyến Rút Lui Khỏi Thượng Hội Đồng QG,” *Xây Dựng*, Oct. 8, 1964.

to “self-disband” and issued 4 demands for the administration: removal of politics from religion, removal of politics from academia, protection of the freedom of discussion, and establishing legal protocols to deal with the previous 3 points. If not, the board argued, “the government cleared the way for military authoritarianism or communist sympathizing neutralism.”<sup>46</sup>

As public outcry against PNSC raged throughout October, the UBC—allegedly tied to both Lê Khắc Quyến and the newspaper *Lập Trường*—took steps to distance itself from the organization. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of October, Thích Tâm Châu—head of the Buddhist Secular Institute—called for the removal of those who “disrupt and are unclean” from the Buddhist Church. He disavowed the usage of the Buddhist name for political purposes and called upon his congregation to protect Buddhist places of worship from political exploitation.<sup>47</sup> Two days later, the Reverend distanced himself from the PNSC in a public statement and, in an interview, stated that he had never met nor conversed with Lê Khắc Quyến. In that same interview, Thích Tâm Châu expressed perhaps his most adamant public rejection of communism, deeming himself deeply opposed to “communist class warfare and the communist belief that religion is the poison of the people.”<sup>48</sup> These statements came amidst public communiques by the Secular Institute on guerrilla kidnapping and assassinations of Buddhists and the communists’ exploitation of Buddhist symbols to “instigate” opposition to the military.<sup>49</sup> This discursive counter-offensive by Buddhists was further reflected in the general press in which at least one author came in defense of Buddhists’ anticommunism and laid out the anticommunist legacy of Vietnamese Buddhism through the words and deeds of its leaders.<sup>50</sup>

Opposition to the PNSC was widespread which depicted political and ideological abuse by politicians, instructors, and other persons of authority to “scheme” chaos and popular disruption in manners that are beneficial to the communist enemy. It was due to these accusations that *Lập Trường* had its October 17<sup>th</sup> issue deal almost exclusively with the relationship between anticommunism within Buddhism.<sup>51</sup> In a philosophical front piece entitled “Buddhism and Communism,” an unknown author made plain his thesis: “Buddhism is

<sup>46</sup> “Trong cuộc hội thảo, một số chính đảng lên án BS Lê Khắc Quyến một cánh tay của Nguyễn Hữu Thọ,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 10, 1964. “Hội thảo về một chính sách khẩn cấp đối phó tình thế giải tán các HĐNDCCQ đã lập từ huế vào tới Phan Thiết,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 9, 1964.

<sup>47</sup> “Thanh Lọc phần tử phá hoại trong Phật Giáo,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 12, 1964. The demand to remove politics from religion, however, was not solely a Buddhist demand. In late December, amidst the rise of the PNSC, Catholics had issued a statement arguing that “religion must be separate from politics.” This, for the Catholics, meant that those ordained must “stand outside of all political issues, apart from situations in which their faith is violated.” “Tuyên Ngôn của Khối Công Giáo Việt Nam Trước Hiện Tình Đất Nước,” *Xây Dựng*, Sep. 25, 1964.

<sup>48</sup> “Biển Cỏ Quan Trọng Xây Trong Phật Giáo Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 19, 1964.

<sup>49</sup> “Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam Bắt Dân Chăm Cờ Phật Giáo để ngăn cản các cuộc hành quân,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 17, 1964; “Viện HỒa Đạo Thoogn Cáo: Tình hình này kéo dài thì khó mà yên,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 16, 1964.

<sup>50</sup> Bạch Nhật, “Phật giáo và Cuộc Chống Cộng,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 30, 1964. In the piece, the author demonstrates the fundamental ideological difference between communism and Buddhism—particularly the difference in appraisal of the human being and the threat that communism posed to not only Buddhism, but religions in general.

<sup>51</sup> This was plain in its regular column “Nhật Ký Lập Trường” which provided commentary on the events of the last two weeks. In its October 17<sup>th</sup> issue, its assessment for the 9<sup>th</sup> of October argued that the newspaper had been “capped” *chup mũ* with so many different labels that it was impossible to keep track of what *Lập Trường* was—from Buddhists, to communist, to neutralist. The newspaper blamed these labels on “communists, authoritarians, militarists, and Cần Lao members.” (“Nhật Ký Lập Trường,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 28, p. 8).



Buddhism, and Communism is Communism.”<sup>52</sup> The two were fundamentally oppositional. Communism does not “acknowledge the soul of the person nor does it acknowledge the necessary development...of that soul.” Buddhism, on the other hand, makes “individuality” its main focus. The piece decried allegations that “Vietnamese Buddhists are communists.” The Vietnamese Buddhist position stemmed from the “pain” caused by both communist oppression as well as “the exploitation of anticommunism.” Anticommunism, the piece concluded, was not simply fighting communists, but also fighting “against those people and those activities that exploit anticommunism.” This was necessary for the anticommunist war—which if lost, would mean the end of Buddhism in Vietnam.<sup>53</sup>

Beyond forcing Buddhists to make plain their anticommunist position, the PNSC movement further inaugurated a broader conservative shift in the general discourse. For one, PNSC demands for a “parliamentary system” was seized upon by numerous editorials *Tự Do*—which had at an earlier point demanded elections and representative democracy—to decry infeasibility of immediate elections within the context of demagogic politics and national instability. Although not rejecting neither civil rule nor the democratic promise, these editorials called for a “strong” administration capable of establishing order, unify nationalist and anticommunist forces, and bringing about social order so that democratic procedures could be implemented.<sup>54</sup>

More importantly, however, was the significant reconfiguration of how to deal with those “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party.” During this period, it was not that the Cần Lao was no longer demonized, but rather the events in the Central region forced a consensus by student organizations, the press, and nationalist parties alike that retribution against the Cần Lao had to be properly managed. This consensus—which grew out of collective opposition to the PNSC—allowed the government to take a much more measured response in dealing with the Cần Lao. Indeed, the government built on opposition to the chaos to lay out its restricted policy. In his conference on the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, the Justice Minister pointed out that if one was to excise “people of the old regime,” virtually the entire administrative and military body would be eliminated. The Justice Ministry faced no opposition when it declared that there would be no specific law pertaining to the Cần Lao. Former members of the Cần Lao, the Minister argued, were also “citizens” and will be civilly tried only if they’ve committed crimes. Indeed, “punishment” would be dealt in accordance with systematic guidelines directed by the Justice

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<sup>52</sup> The piece was dedicated to Thích Thiện Mỹ who died in October of 1963 amidst Buddhist struggles against the Diệm administration. Despite the fact that the author was not identified in *Lập Trường*, Keyes Beech of the Chicago Daily News Service attributed the article to Thích Trí Quang (“Buddhists Opposing Viet Reds,” *The Washington Post*, Oct 24, 1964). Direct evidence that can corroborate this attribution is scarce. However, given the broader distancing that the UBC and Secular Institute were taking away from the PNSC, it is quite possible that Thích Trí Quang—like Thích Tâm Châu—was attempting to defend Buddhism against charges of communist sympathies and connection with such a piece.

<sup>53</sup> “Phật Giáo Với Cộng Sản,” *Lập Trường*, Is. 28, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> On possibility of communist exploitation of elections, demagogic politics corrupting the elections, and connection to Lê Khắc Quyến, see editorials in *Tự Do*: “Tiến Đến một chánh phủ dân cử,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 17, 1964. Bảo Quang, “Chế Độ Đại Nghị,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 23, 1964; Đặng Văn Thiện, “Ý Kiến Bạn Đọc: Vấn đề ‘Quốc Dân Đại Hội’? Sinh Viên và Học Sinh,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 9, 1964; Trần Ngọc Ninh, “Đề cập lại vấn đề hiến pháp,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 10, 1964. Indeed, responding to the political turmoil of the times, scheduled municipal elections were pushed back indefinitely: Law 295-NV dated Oct. 9, 1964: “Tạm hoãn Bầu Cử Hội Đồng Nhân Dân Các Cấp,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 21, 1964.

Ministry.<sup>55</sup> Representative of this shift in the anti-Cần Lao discourse, Nguyễn Khánh famously argued that “Cần Lao who are honestly anticommunists and wholeheartedly work for the fatherland [are] better than those who claim ‘love for the nation’ but goes against the benefits of the people”—an argument that would have amounted to political suicide just a few months before.<sup>56</sup>

Although remaining largely unresolved, demands for retribution against the Cần Lao became significantly less supported than it was in January of 1964. The chaos bred by the PNSC pushed popular opinion against chaotic retribution and turned the responsibility of punishment over to the state which took a measured response. Moreover, the PNSC demonstrates how the label of “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party” can be abused and lose its political effect. An editorial published amidst the rising opposition to the PNSC made this poignant. The author laments the discursive context of the Cần Lao issue—some advocating for radical measures while other for measured protocols. However, these opinions were never met with “technique” and thus were unable to “draw those with goodwill, with objectivity” and had caused “chaos” amongst the populace. This, for the author, was evident amongst the “protests in the Central region” in which slogans of “Down with the CL! Punish the CL!” were used so poorly that “the struggle had completely lost its meaning and only caused harm to the spirit of unity.”<sup>57</sup> A similar argument was made by Đặng Văn Sung who decried the loss of meaning for the promised “revolution.”<sup>58</sup>

Amidst the general disillusionment with revolutionary and demagogic politics, a professor publishes an editorial in *Chính Luận* examining the steps forward within a political atmosphere of misinformation, deception, and demagogic politics. The solution was to revive nationalism, “to somehow make the righteous of the Nation burn bright... within the hearts of the citizenry.” This, however, cannot be achieved in the manner of what was seen in August and September in which the people of the Republic had seen how “those who hailed democracy to deceive the people.” The author called for a reconceptualization of the “basic ideals... [that served] as the cornerstone of political thoughts and life.” Amongst those core ideals, most paramount was that of “Freedom.” Freedom, in the Vietnamese political vocabulary, had not properly reconceptualized to cope with contemporary conditions. It remains tied to the “French” definition of the term which was proper during the age of colonial revolution but was politically inappropriate for 1964. That definition of “Freedom” was “opposition to the state.” The concept of “freedom” in 1964 must be rooted in “security” and an effective state. Those were necessary aspects to ensure the survivability of the nation—and the nation, in 1964, was fighting for its life.<sup>59</sup> Similar assessments were largely shared by many segments of the South Vietnamese society. A student organization emerged in mid-October, for example, declaring its support for a “strong,” “clean” and non-authoritarian administration.<sup>60</sup> In *Chính Luận*, an editorial advised

<sup>55</sup> Those who were corrupt and aided the finance of the Ngô Family will be tried in court and those who rose through the administrative ranks by virtue of the Ngô Family would be re-ranked (“Tổng trưởng tư pháp xác nhận: Chưa có luật trừng phạt những người được gọi là đảng viên cần lao,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 17, 1964; “Đại tá tổng trưởng tư pháp họp báo: Thanh toán chế độ chủ: Gay quá!” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 17, 1964).

<sup>56</sup> “Hội Đồng Nhân Dân Cứu Quốc Huế không được Chính Phủ Công Nhận,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 12, 1964.

<sup>57</sup> “Cần Lao, Một con ngựa nộm?” *Xây Dựng*, Oct. 5, 1964.

<sup>58</sup> “Nhân vụ lợi dụng phong trào thanh toán Cần Lao để nổi loạn ở Qui Nhơn, đặt vấn đề với THĐQG,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 1, 1964.

<sup>59</sup> Nguyễn Cao Hách, “Tự Do Phá Hoại và Tự Do Xây Dựng,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 12, 1964.

<sup>60</sup> “Tổng Hội Sinh Viên Quốc Gia Ra Mắt Báo Chí Thủ Đô: Đòi Phải Có Chính Phủ Mạnh Nhưng Phải Trong Sạch và Không Được Độc Tài,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 14, 1964.

caution of those who advocate for chaos and protest,<sup>61</sup> another called for the end to student protests,<sup>62</sup> another called students to restrict their activism to the universities,<sup>63</sup> and Đặng Văn Sung publishes a lengthy political-philosophical thesis indicating the need to reconfigure the definition of “revolution,” move away from the “destructive” nature in which revolution had been conducted in the past, and conform contemporary revolutionary practices to the “underdevelopment” of Vietnam.<sup>64</sup> Political focus began turning away from retribution against the former regime towards issues of anticommunist unity, political stability and national “righteousness.”<sup>65</sup>

Catholics, on their part, demanded retribution against those who mobilized anti-Cần Lao sentiments to attack Catholic communities and nationalist parties in Central Vietnam.<sup>66</sup> Catholics, since mid-September, had been reporting on the violent activities of PNSC and advocated for a strong, anticommunist government capable of suppressing the continuing political chaos. Beginning on the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, the newspaper *Xây Dựng* ran a daily column entitled “The Truth About the Central Region” written by Anh Ninh<sup>67</sup> which reported on violent PNSC activities in Central Vietnam covering the provinces of Qui Nhon, Đà Nẵng, and Tam Kỳ-Huế. Other reports implicated the PNSC as a communist puppet and pointed to Lê Khắc Quyến as not only henchman of the communist guerrillas, but also debunked his “revolutionary” legitimacy by pointing to his services to the Diệm administration.<sup>68</sup>

Following the collapse of the PNSC, *Xây Dựng* continued to run regular condemnations of the movement long into January of 1965. As the new administration of Trần Văn Hương was forming, the Center for Catholic Struggle led by militant Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh released a statement confirming its support for a strong, civil administration capable to dealing with the political chaos of the times and uninfluenced by any interest groups. Furthermore, the statement supported an administration that could successfully unify South Vietnam by properly responding to the “rightful demands” of “important components of the citizenry” while warning against demagogic politics.<sup>69</sup> In *Xây Dựng*, the conservative shift was more adamant. In its November 3<sup>rd</sup> editorial, the newspaper made clear that the most important “standpoint” for the new administration to take was not democracy, representation or the purported “revolution.” Rather, it was anticommunism. Legitimacy of the administration would be lost, the newspaper warned, if

<sup>61</sup> “Bức Thư Ngỏ của Hội Ái Hữu Sinh Viên Học Sinh Tỉnh Bình Định,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 7, 1964.

<sup>62</sup> Tranh Hại, “Ý Kiến Chúng Tôi Quanh Mấy Vụ Biểu Tình,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 17, 1964.

<sup>63</sup> Võ Hữu Dụng, “Nhận Định Về Những Cuộc Tranh Đấu của Sinh Viên,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 26, 1964

<sup>64</sup> Đặng Văn Sung, “Thử Tìm Hiểu Bài Tính Cách Mạng Việt Nam,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 25, 1964.

<sup>65</sup> Illustrative of this shift, see Đặng Văn Thiện, “Vấn Đề ‘Quốc Dân Đại Hội? Sinh Viên Và Học Sinh,” *Tự Do*, Oct. 9-10, 1964 which covers condemnation of “demagogy” of the PNSC, rejection of immediate elections given the circumstances of Vietnam, as well as calling for a “Anticommunist Assembly” rather than just a “National Assembly.”

<sup>66</sup> Calls retribution continued into January. See Tường Anh and Lê Thiết Dũng, “Chúng Tôi Xin Hỏi CP Trần Văn Hương,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan. 15, 1965; “Phải Thực Hiện Một Vụ Điện Hình Chống Cộng,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan. 23, 1965.

<sup>67</sup> Most likely a penname for “An Ninh,” which means “security.”

<sup>68</sup> “Thanh Niên, Sinh Viên và Học Sinh Yêu Cầu BS Quyến Rút Lui Khỏi Thượng Hội Đồng QG,” *Xây Dựng*, Oct. 8, 1964.

<sup>69</sup> “Thông Cáo Số 7 Của Trung Ương TĐ Công Giáo VN,” *Xây Dựng*, Nov. 3, 1964. This position continued in *Xây Dựng*. See the primacy of national security over freedom and democracy: Ý Dân (Will of the People), “Thực Trạng Vấn Đề An Ninh,” *Xây Dựng*, Nov. 5, 1964.

even one of its cabinet members lacked anticommunist resolve. For after all, “there was not a more important political standpoint than that of the standpoint towards communism.”<sup>70</sup>

By the end of October, the PNSC had ceased operations. Apart from the faculty in Huế, a number of its leading members across the Central Region had been arrested and their mobilization had been shut down by the military. The PNSC, however, left an indelible mark upon South Vietnamese politics—particularly pushing political conversations around those “vestiges” of the old regime away from calls for outright extermination. Moreover, it turned multiple political voices away from the “chaos” that was conjured through mobilization. Yet, as soon as the PNSC came to an end, a new wave of political instability shook South Vietnam as students and Buddhists waged protests and demonstrations against the Hương administration.

### *The Civil Administration of Trần Văn Hương*

The protests against Trần Văn Hương were not originally a Buddhist issue. Rather, the root of protest came on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November when Hương inaugurated his cabinet. The cabinet was criticized for its inexperience, its lack of “revolutionary” personnel and was largely seen as a body composed of “technicians” similar to what the Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ cabinet had been.<sup>71</sup> Most important, however, was the fact that Trần Văn Hương failed to consult with political groups and sought their support in the formation of his cabinet—a political practice that Nguyễn Khánh had initiated in January of 1964 which had once ensured his administration’s legitimacy. Criticism of Hương’s cabinet came from all quarters including nationalist parties, Catholics, Buddhists, students, and even members within the HNC. Each of these political components called for the resignation of cabinet members and the formation of a new administration that properly represented South Vietnam’s political diversity.<sup>72</sup> Although Nguyễn Xuân Chử—the sitting Chairman of the HNC—resigned in protest of Hương’s cabinet on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November, protests did not erupt until the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November. Catholic and Buddhist leaders—early on—had called for calm and negated calls for “taking it to the streets” *xuống đường*.<sup>73</sup> Hương’s refusal to cave to popular demand and his public allegations implicating the Secular Institute to the November

<sup>70</sup> “Không Có Khuynh Hướng Chính Trị Nào Quan trọng Hơn là Lập Trường Chống Cộng,” *Xây Dựng*, Nov. 3, 1964.

<sup>71</sup> “Mấy Nhận Xét Về Thành Phần Chính Phủ Trần V. Hương,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 6, 1964; “Chính Phủ Trần Văn Hương Chuyên Môn Hay Cách Mạng?” *Tự Do*, Nov. 6, 1964; “Sơ Lược Tiểu Sử Các Nhân Viên Trong Tân Chánh Phủ,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 6, 1964; Đặng Văn Sung, “Nghĩ Gì về Tân Chánh Phủ?” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 6, 1964; Đoàn Thêm, p. 415.

<sup>72</sup> “Đur Luận Trong Cũng Như Ngoài Nước Phản Ứng Không Thuận Lợi Đối Với Chính Phủ Trần Văn Hương,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 7, 1964; “Sô Nôi Vì Tân Nội Các,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 7, 1964; “Nội Các Tr. V. Hương Bị Tấn Công,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 9, 1964; “Tuyên Ngôn của Lực Lượng Đặc Biệt Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng: Ủng Hộ Lập Trường Cụ Chử,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 7, 1964; “Trong Thư Gửi Thượng hội Đồng: BS Quyên Đặt Vấn Đề Tín Nhiệm hay không tín nhiệm Chính Phủ Tr. V. Hương,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 9, 1964; “Đại diện 7 đoàn thể không tín nhiệm tân chính phủ,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 9, 1964; “Sê Cài Tô Nội Các,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 11, 1964; “36 Cựu Chính trị Phạm Gửi Thư: yêu Cầu TV Hương Từ Chức,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 11, 1964; “Kiến Nghị của Phong trào Giáo Giới Cách Mạng,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 11, 1964; “Thông Cáo số 16 của Thượng Hội Đồng: Thượng Hội Đồng Không Đồng Ý Với Chính Phủ Về Thành Phần Nội Các,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 12, 1964; “Tuy có công kích một số Tổng Trưởng, nghi ngờ hiệu năng của nội các, Thượng Hội Đồng Vẫn Tín Nhiệm,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 16, 1964; “Thượng Hội Đồng Đã Thành Lập: Ủy Ban Cứu Xét Nội Các,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 18, 1964.

<sup>73</sup> “Công Giáo và Tân Nội Các,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 14, 1964; “Công Giáo và Phật Giáo không chủ trương ‘xuống đường’ trong lúc này,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 25, 1964; “Phát Ngôn Viên Trung Ương Công Giáo cho Biết: Chính Phủ cần phải cải tổ những phải thông cảm các nỗi khó khăn của Chính Quyền,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 26, 1964; Cộng Đồng Giáo Dân VN Tuyên Cáo: Cương Quyết Chống Biểu Tình, không phụng sự 1 cá nhân nào” *Tự Do*, Dec. 7, 1964.

22<sup>nd</sup> protest, however, pushed the Buddhist leadership to later advocate for drastic opposition in January of 1965.<sup>74</sup>

Multiple issues prevented the opposition against Hương in November from reaching the proportions that shook South Vietnam during August. From November until the end of 1964, there were only 2 major protests that hit Saigon—one on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November and another on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Both of these protests were somewhat smaller and less chaotic than what was seen in August and was each led largely by student demonstrators.<sup>75</sup> First, unlike the opposition against Khánh’s Vũng Tàu Charter, the protests against Trần Văn Hương evolved from student agitation into a nearly exclusive Buddhist affair. Furthermore, “taking it to the streets” was not the first choice of action. For the most part, nationalist parties, a number of university students,<sup>76</sup> and the Catholics rejected “taking it to the streets,” although some “oppositional” organizations sought to oppose the administration through legal and official means.<sup>77</sup> Even the Buddhists initially sought to resolve the issue diplomatically. Thích Tâm Châu had early on sought to resolve the issue by appealing to Phan Khắc Sửu to disband the Hương government arguing that the new administration lacked the “confidence of the people.”<sup>78</sup> Following the November 25<sup>th</sup> protest, Buddhist leaders condemned those who exploited the Secular Institute for mobilization, called upon people to not gather in front of the Secular Institute, rejected responsibility for the protests and finally closed down Buddhist religious locations from the 27<sup>th</sup> of November to the 13<sup>th</sup> of December.<sup>79</sup>

While the protests did not immediately implicate Buddhist mobilization, the Hương administration pointed blame at the Buddhists—a claim adamantly rejected by the Buddhist

<sup>74</sup> “Tại Sao Ông Trần Văn Hương Không Muốn cải tổ nội các trong lúc này?” *Tự Do*, Nov. 13, 1964; “Trái Vời Tin Đồn, Chiều Thứ Hai Không có Biểu tình và ‘đẹp’ biểu tình: Quốc Trưởng Không Từ Chức—Nội Các Không Cải Tổ,” *Chính luận*, Nov. 25, 1964

<sup>75</sup> Implicated in the protests was the Student Union in Saigon—which early on threatened the administration with ultimatums and inevitable protests (“Sinh Viên Sẽ Biểu Tình Nếu Đến Nửa Đêm thứ 5(12-11) Chính Phủ TV Hương Không Cải Tổ Toàn Diện” *Tự Do*, Nov. 12, 1964). Size of protests counted in the low thousands, beginning with just 500 in the early morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. It did not have the participation of the wider populace as seen in the August riot nor were there reports of sympathy protest coming from the Central Region (“Hai Cuộc Biểu Tình Bị Đàn Áp Dữ Dội,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 24, 1964; “Hai Cuộc Biểu Tình Trong 1 Ngày,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 24, 1964; “Hôm Qua 25-11 Học Sinh 12 Trường Bãi Khóa Rối Loạn Từ 9G. Sáng tới 9G. Tối,” *Chính Luận* Nov. 27, 1964)

<sup>76</sup> Contemporary reports highlight “Students from Xá Minh Mạng University” stood in direct opposition to protests (“Hội Thảo Sôi Nổi Tại Đại Học Xã Minh Mạng: Tiếng Chuông Thứ 2 của Sinh Viên,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 10, 1964; “Sinh Viên Đại Học Xá Minh Mạng Kêu Gọi: Chống Xuống Đường,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 13, 1964); Reports from the November 22<sup>nd</sup> protests indicated street fights between those students who wanted to “take it to the streets” and those who did not (Đoàn Thêm, p. 417; “Khi Học Trò Nổi Máu...Chính Khách: Học Sinh NG. T. Tộ và Nguyễn Tải Choảng Nhau võ đầu vì đã đảo hay không đã đảo Chính Phủ Hương,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 25, 1964)

<sup>77</sup> Cộng Đồng Giáo Dân VN Tuyên Cáo: Cương Quyết Chống Biểu Tình, không phụng sự 1 cá nhân nào” *Tự Do*, Dec. 7, 1964; “Lực Lượng Liên Kết Đấu Tranh Kêu Gọi: Thủ Tướng Hãy Bình Tĩnh, các Chính Khách Đối Lập Hãy Thận Trọng,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 5, 1964;

<sup>78</sup> “Phật Giáo Đòi Quốc Trưởng và Thượng hội Đồng Hãy có thái độ dứt khoát với Chính Phủ Trần Văn Hương,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 26, 1964.

<sup>79</sup> “Viện Hóa Đạo Phủ Nhận Chủ Trương Biểu Tin Ngày 22-11,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 24, 1964; “Thượng Tòa Pháp Tri Tuyên Bỏ: Viện Hóa Đạo Sẽ Tố Cáo Những Kẻ Lợi Dụng Viện Hóa Đạo Xách Động Quần Chúng,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 28, 1964; “Viện Hóa Đạo Yêu Cầu Tránh Mọi Cuộc Tu Tập và Yêu Cầu Đồng Bào Ra Về,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 28, 1964; “Viện Hóa Đạo Thanh Minh: Cuộc Biểu tình không xuất phát từ nơi tôn nghiêm đáng kính,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 30, 1964; Đoàn Thêm, *20 Năm Qua*, p. 419; “Sau 2 Ngày Họp kín: Phật Giáo Gửi Thư Cho Đại Sứ Taylor, Quốc Trưởng và THĐ,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 14, 1964.

leadership. Official statements on the protests, for example, indicated that the demonstrations—and the ensuing chaos—originated from the Secular Institute.<sup>80</sup> The Buddhist funeral procession for Lê Văn Ngọc—a student protester on the 25<sup>th</sup> who died—was cut short by local police who claimed they had seized hidden weapons stored in a funeral car. Even worse, Hương called the funeral procession a communist “scheme” which “exploited a corpse brought in from an unknown origin brought into the Buddhist Secular Institute” to be used as propaganda in hopes of toppling the government and seizing state power.<sup>81</sup> Despite public demands by Buddhist leaders for the government to recant its allegations, the Hương administration remained silent on the issue. Buddhist leaders—initially opposing “taking it to the streets”—conducted their own form of opposition by holding a 48-hour hunger strike on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December when their appeals to American diplomats fell on deaf ears.<sup>82</sup> This was met with a response by Hương that “Buddhist leaders had no reason to fast” along with threats against any attempts to topple the administration.<sup>83</sup> By early January, the relationship between Buddhists and the Hương administration only became increasingly sour as one of the Buddhists most esteemed leaders, Thích Hộ Giác, was removed from his position as Deputy Director of the Buddhist Chaplain Corp—a position he had held since the formation of the Corp in July of 1964.<sup>84</sup>

Second, also unlike the events in August, the Hương administration used force to crush protests or any public demonstrations that could potentially be chaotic. The military had early on vowed support for the Hương administration and Khánh threatened the use of force against any protests.<sup>85</sup> He made good on his promise. During the two days of protests in November, teargas, riot-gear police, and paratroopers were used to disperse demonstrations. Hundreds were arrested and injured were rampant, including the 1 reported death of Lê Văn Ngọc. Trần Văn Hương, for the most part, vacillated between deeming the protests as either as one planned or infiltrated by communists or implied connections to “politicians” who exploited places of worship like the Secular Institute.<sup>86</sup> Following the violent protests on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Saigon and Gia Định were placed under martial law thus staving off public demonstrations for the remainder of the year.<sup>87</sup>

Third, a series of disasters hit South Vietnam following the initial wave of protests. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, a train without a conductor drove into Saigon Station killing 9 civilians and causing enormous destruction to adjacent buildings.<sup>88</sup> On December 7<sup>th</sup>, a major guerrilla offensive attacked a refugee site for flood victims in Bình Định Province killing 5 civilians and 5

<sup>80</sup> Secular Institute implicated, see “Tiếng Chuông Bộ Nội Vụ,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 30, 1964; Buddhist response: “Thích Tâm Châu Hợp Báo,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 1, 1964; “Viện Hóa Đạo Thanh Minh: Cuộc Biểu tình không xuất phát từ nơi tôn nghiêm đáng kính,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 30, 1964.

<sup>81</sup> “Hiệu Triệu của Thủ Tướng sau Đám Táng ngày 29-11,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 1, 1964.

<sup>82</sup> Đoàn Thêm, *20 Năm Qua*, p. 421

<sup>83</sup> “Thủ Tướng Hương Tuyên Bộ: Các Lãnh Tụ Phật Giáo Không có lý do gì để tuyệt thực,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 15, 1964.

<sup>84</sup> “Bộ Quân Lực Chính Thức Cắt Chức Tuyên Ủy của Đại Đức Hộ Giác,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 7, 1965.

<sup>85</sup> “Triệt Đê Ủng Hộ Chính Phủ Dân Sự,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 29, 1964; “Tướng Khánh sẽ giải tán biểu tình nếu có lệnh của Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 9, 1964; “Thủ Tướng Tiếp TT Nguyễn Khánh rồi đọc hiệu triệu đề cao vai trò quân đội,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 13, 1964.

<sup>86</sup> Thủ tướng Hiệu Triệu Quốc Dân Đồng Bào: Đã Có Bằng Chứng VC đứng sau lưng các cuộc biểu tình vừa qua,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 28, 1964; “Hiệu Triệu của Ông Trần Văn Hươn về các cuộc biểu tình ngày 22-11,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 24, 1964.

<sup>87</sup> “Tăng Cường Giới Nghiêm Sài Gòn- Gia Định,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 27, 1964.

<sup>88</sup> “Tai Nạn Khủng Khiếp tại Ga Saigon,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 1, 1964.

South Vietnamese soldiers.<sup>89</sup> On December 27, another guerrilla attack took place on the outskirts of Saigon placing a Catholic hamlet under guerrilla occupation for 2 days.<sup>90</sup> However, perhaps amongst the most major were a series of tropical storms that lambasted Central Vietnam beginning in early November. By the 18<sup>th</sup>, some 7000 deaths were recorded as tens of thousands of homes were destroyed. A governmental committee was formed to aid victims of the flood which drew much support from numerous segments of civil society.<sup>91</sup> Despite the widespread opposition to Hương's cabinet, the humanitarian and national security disaster caused by tropical storms pushed some of the political effort that would have been dedicated to the social upsurge towards that of helping victims.<sup>92</sup> Most importantly, in the Central Region—once the hotbed of much political agitation—students activities focus on flood relief rather than opposition against the administration.<sup>93</sup> Trần Văn Hương, furthermore, quickly utilized the destruction of the storms and flood in the Central region to decry student protesters as not only “irresponsible” in the face of national disaster—essentially deeming them spoiled urban youths—but also threatening national security.<sup>94</sup>

And finally, events in late December further pushed back any planned protests by the Buddhists or the students. The newly formed Armed Forces Council (AFC) designated to serve as an advisory body for the new administration<sup>95</sup> conducted a partial coup on the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> which effectively disbanded the HNC. 6 HNC members were arrested as well as a number of civilians, students, and politicians. Although the official statement by the AFC following the coup pointed blame at communist and neutralist infiltration of the HNC (personified by Lê Khắc Quyến), it was clear that the AFC coup retaliated against an HNC resolution which denied the forced retirement of a number of senior military officers—amongst them Dương Văn Minh and the 4 Đà Lạt generals.<sup>96</sup> This demand had been initially pushed by the “Young Turks” who came into prominence after having successfully protected Nguyễn Khánh from the attempted coup in

<sup>89</sup> “VC Tấn Công Tu Viện Nguyễn Thiệu Giết 5 Người Làm Bị Thương 15,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 10, 1964.

<sup>90</sup> “VC Lại Chiếm Thị Trấn Bình Giả,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 31, 1964.

<sup>91</sup> By December, some 50 million piastres (approx. 700,000 USD) had been collected. Newspapers, like *Tự Do*, participated in collecting funds for flood relief. *Tự Do* collected donations, the sum of which can amount to nearly \$30,000 in a single day (“Số Quyên Giúp Nạn Nhân Bão Lụt,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 23, 1964). 70,000 tons of rice originally placed on the international market were retracted to be sent to the central region. Civil servants in Quảng Trị gave up a day of pay in contribution to the humanitarian efforts. The Hòa Hảo sect took in some 10,000 children affected by the typhoon.

<sup>92</sup> One editorial in *Xây Dựng* called upon youths to not “take it to the streets” in protests, but rather “take it to the streets to save victims [of the flood]” (“Nỗi lòng của một sinh viên trước niềm đau tở quốc: Hãy xuống đường đi cứu nạn!” *Xây Dựng*, Nov. 21, 1964). The Mutual Association of North Vietnamese refugees ceased their organizing of “Political Discussions” to focus on bringing aid to flood victims: “Cứu Bão Lụt Trước, Làm Chính Trị Sau” *Tự Do*, Nov. 23, 1964;

<sup>93</sup> “Sinh Viên Học Sinh xuống đường giúp bão lụt miền trung,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 10, 1964.

<sup>94</sup> “Hiệu Triệu của Thủ Tướng sau Đám Táng ngày 29-11,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 1, 1964.

<sup>95</sup> The role of the Armed Forces Council was originally dictated in the Provisional Charter of Oct. 20. Its role presented in the Charter was to be the same as when was officially formed on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Dec. (“Đã Thành Lập HĐ Quân Lực để cố vấn Tổng Tư Lệnh về Quân Kỳ,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 21, 1964; “Lập Xong Hội Đồng Quân Lực,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 21, 1964).

<sup>96</sup> “Hội Đồng Quân Lực Lập Đồ Thượng hội Đồng, Tu Chính Hiến Chương để thực hiện chủ trương Quân Đội Mạnh—Chính Phủ Vững,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 22, 1964; “Hai Văn Kiện Chính Thức Giải Tán THĐ Và Sửa Lại Hiến Chương,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 22, 1964; “Quân Đội Chỉ Làm Công Việc ‘Hột Rác,’” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 23, 1964; “QT Phan Kh Sứ Làm Trung Gian hòa giải với ĐHQQL Lập Lại Thượng Hội Đồng QG với Thành Phần Mới,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 24, 1964.

September.<sup>97</sup> The Young Turks, by December, dominated military leadership and—unlike the previous members of the RMC—were politically-minded, carving out a national role for the military as the political “intermediary” during periods of instability and national conflict.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, immediately following the coup, Buddhist leaders temporarily called off all planned mobilization and demonstrations to await the unfolding developments.<sup>99</sup>

While the coup in December eliminated the HNC—the legal basis of civil administration in South Vietnam—the AFC declared support for both Trần Văn Hương and Phan Khắc Sửu and both were retained in their original position. A joint resolution was finally reached on the 9<sup>th</sup> between the military and civil administration, ultimately resolving what was effectively a crisis of national leadership—a resolution, however, rejected by the Buddhists.<sup>100</sup> Some measures seeking to assuage Buddhist agitation were made during the early days of January. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, 20 students arrested during the November protests and slated to appear before military court were released.<sup>101</sup> A joint resolution between the military, Buddhists, Catholics, Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo group was made mid-January to form a new “Civilian-Military Council” to replace the HNC as a legislative body and reaffirmed commitments to fight communism.<sup>102</sup> National Assembly elections were promised for the 21<sup>st</sup> of March<sup>103</sup> and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, Nguyễn Chánh Thi, and Nguyễn Hữu Cồ—all members of the “Young Turks”—sought to use their newfound political clout to publicly acknowledge Buddhist grievances while scolding students for the chaos caused, warning against protests, and defending the legitimacy of the Hương administration.<sup>104</sup>

These attempts were too little and too late. While efforts of the Hương administration in January sought to mend political bridges, much of these efforts were allocated toward satisfying

<sup>97</sup> “Young Officers Demand Purge of Viet Generals,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 20, 1964; “Young Officers Demand Purge of Viet Generals,” *Los Angeles Times*, Sep 27, 1964; included in the list of names opposed by the Young Turks in September were Đỗ Mậu and Trần Thiện Khiêm. The Đà Lạt generals—Lt. Gens. Lê Văn Kim, Trần Văn Đôn, Mai Hữu Xuân, and Tôn Thất Đính—were arrested during the January coup and placed under house arrest in Đà Lạt, released in May of 1964 after a 27-hour trial which bore no evidence of their alleged “pro-neutralist and pro-France” sentiments (“Sau 27 giờ thảo luận liên tiếp tại Đà Lạt: Xử các Tướng Đôn, Kim, Đính..,” *Tự Do*, Jun 2, 1964; “12 Chính Đảng Được Hoạt Động,” *Tự Do*, Jun 6, 1964), were brought to serve in the Defense Ministry by Khánh in early September (Hai cuộc họp báo của Ban Lãnh Đạo LTQGQL và Chính Phủ,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 11, 1964), and were given back their military ranks in October (“5 Tướng Đà Lạt Phục Chức, 5 Chuẩn Tướng Lên Thiếu Tướng,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 23, 1964).

<sup>98</sup> “ĐT Tổng Tư Lệnh Xác Nhận Lập Trường Quân Lực Ủng Hộ Chính Phủ Dân Sự Lành Mạnh,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 24, 1964.

<sup>99</sup> “Ý Kiến các nhà lãnh đạo Phật Giáo về Thái Độ của Viện Hóa Đạo sau Biến Cố ngày 20-12,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 26, 1964; “Viện Hóa Đạo Hợp Bỏ sau vụ ‘phá VN Quốc Tử’ nếu ‘vụ 20-12’ hợp long dân thì Phật giáo ủng hộ,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 29, 1964; “Taylor Takes Tough Line: U. S. Threatens Viet Insurgents,” *Boston Globe*, Dec 21, 1964; “U.S. DEFIED BY VIET ARMY,” *Chicago Tribune*, Dec 21, 1964

<sup>100</sup> “Thông Cáo Chung của Chánh Quyền Dân Sự và Quân Lực Việt Nam CH,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 12, 1965; “Mặc dù cuộc khủng hoảng được xem như kết thúc nhưng Viện Hóa Đạo tuyên bố,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 13, 1965.

<sup>101</sup> “20 Sinh Viên Học Sinh bị bắt trong đám ma trò Ngọc và ngày 20-12 Được Phụ Huynh Bảo Lãnh Về,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 15, 1965.

<sup>102</sup> “Đại Diện Phật Giáo, Công Giáo, Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo và Hội Đồng Quân Lực vừa Ký Thông Cáo Chung Chiến Đấu Chống Cộng,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 18, 1965

<sup>103</sup> “Chính Phủ, Quân Đội và Tòa Đại Sứ Mỹ đã đạt tới thỏa hiệp: Triệu Tập Quốc Hội vào Tháng 3 này,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 9, 1965

<sup>104</sup> “Thiếu Tướng Ng. Cao Kỳ thảo luận với sinh viên về vụ ‘ra tòa,’” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 7, 1965; “Thiếu Tướng Nguyễn Chánh Thi Cho Biết: Nếu muốn ổn định tình thế,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 11, 1965;



the military rather than the Buddhists.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, by this juncture, Buddhists were no longer calling for reform; they demanded the complete ouster of Trần Văn Hương and his cabinet. The second wave of Buddhist resumed on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January. These early January protests targeted the trials of students arrested in the November protests who were due to appear in military court<sup>106</sup> and were largely isolated to Central Vietnam.<sup>107</sup> When it became clear that the December coup against the HNC would not mean the end of the Hương administration, however, Buddhist leaders resumed their struggle demanding the ouster of Hương—this time with active participation of Buddhist bonzes inaugurating a week of mobilization ultimately resulting in the end of the Hương administration.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of January five leaders of the UBC initiated an indefinite hunger strike until Hương was removed from power.<sup>108</sup> Before some 10,000 Buddhist bonzes, Thích Tâm Châu declared that the Buddhist Church had been “humiliated and accused from all forms of deceitful propaganda” and publicly announced the resumption of Buddhist struggle, inaugurating nationwide, massive protests.<sup>109</sup> These demonstrations targeted not only Hương but also American foreign policy in Vietnam. Like in August, Americans were decried as intervening in Vietnamese domestic affairs, supporting an “authoritarian” administration and going against the will of the Vietnamese people. On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 450 monks and nuns protested outside of the US embassy, handing Taylor a letter demanding cessation of American support for Hương. The Abraham Lincoln United States Information Services Library (USIS) was sacked with stone in Saigon. In Huế, another USIS library was sacked by some 3,000 protestors demanding the ouster of not only Hương, but also Maxwell Taylor.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Not only were 5 military officers slated for the new legislative body—the “Civilian-Military Council”—thus taking up more than 1/3 of the 17-man composition, 4 military generals were inaugurated into Hương’s reform cabinet—3 of which were placed in important defense position (Nguyễn Văn Thiệu as 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Premier, Trần Văn Minh as Defense Minister, Linh Quang Viên as Psychological Warfare Minister [replacing Information Ministry]). Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, for some reason, was placed as Youth Minister—a position he was not particularly enthusiastic about (“Hội Đồng Quân Dân Gồm 17 Hội Viên,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 20, 1965; “Sau một ngày đình hoãn...[censored content]...đông đủ nội các đã tinh diện,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 22, 1965).

<sup>106</sup> “Tòa Quân Sự Đình Xử Vụ 17 Học Sinh, Sinh Viên bị truy tố về tội phá rối trị an,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 5, 1964; Phan Nghị “Nhân Vụ Tòa Sắp xử 20 sinh viên Học Sinh Biểu Tình yêu cầu trả tự do cho các người sắp bị xử,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 6, 1965; “Thiếu Tướng Nguyễn Chánh Thi Tuyên Bố với Đồng Bào Miền Trung: Lúc này hết cần đảo chánh quân sự,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 21, 1965; “Thiếu Tướng Tư Lệnh VŨng III kiêm Đại Biểu Chính Phủ Cao Nguyên giải quyết Vụ Rắc Rối ở Đà Lạt,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 22, 1965; “Thiếu Tướng Ng. Chánh Thi Tuyên Bố Không phản đối đấu tranh cho cách mạng dân chủ nhưng cần đặng các cấp lãnh đạo quân chúng đừng để CS biên mình thành dụng cụ của chúng,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 22, 1965

<sup>107</sup> A general strike was initiated in Huế on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and sympathy anti-government protests in Qui Nhon, Đà Nẵng, Quảng Trị soon joined.

<sup>108</sup> Reports on hunger strike in the South Vietnamese press were censored out, as well as the demands of the Buddhists and criticisms of American presence. The Western press, on the other hand, had full details on the events: “CABINET IMPASSE ENDED IN SAIGON” *New York Times*, Jan 21, 1965

<sup>109</sup> “Giáo Hội Phật Giáo quyết định Tạm ngưng thuyết pháp đồng cửa VNQT và đình chi vận động ở tỉnh,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 21, 1965; “Sau khi ra lệnh cho mấy trăm Tăng Ni ai về chùa nấy Viện Hóa Đạo họp báo loan báo quyết định [censored: tuyệt thực] của cấp lãnh đạo,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 22, 1965; “Mấy Trăm Thanh Thiếu Niên và Tăng Ni Biểu Tình Thư Viện Mỹ Bị Đập Phá,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 25, 1965.

<sup>110</sup> “SAIGON BUDDHISTS STONE U.S. LIBRARY,” *New York Times*, Jan 23, 1965; “Top Viet Nam Generals Decide To Keep Supporting Premier,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jan 25, 1965; “Rioting Spreads in 3 Viet Nam Cities,” *Boston Globe*, Jan 25, 1965;

The target of the protester's demands pinpointed American actions in the immediate aftermath of the December Coup. The Buddhists had ceased mobilization awaiting what they believed were developments that would ultimately result in the ouster of Hương. The disbandment of the HNC, after all, eliminated the legal basis of the Hương administration.<sup>111</sup> The political entity that came to the defense of the Hương administration and the HNC was not any civil societal groups in South Vietnam, but rather from American diplomatic officials. Maxwell Taylor had convened a meeting with leading members of the AFC immediately following the December Coup in which he reportedly threatened the cessation of American aid, scolded the young generals for their actions, demanded the restoration of the HNC, and the continuation of civil rule. Nguyễn Khánh, however, went against Taylor, defended the Young Turks and implied that Taylor's actions amounted to American intervention in Vietnamese internal affairs. What ultimately resulted was not the removal of the Hương administration, but rather the integration of 4 military personnel into Hương's cabinet—a resolution rejected by the Buddhists who saw it was due to American intervention that the Hương administration not only continued but was reinforced with military support.<sup>112</sup>

The military remained on the side of the Hương administration at least until the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. However, the very next day, an enormous procession of 20,000 marched in Huế demanding the ouster of Hương and condemnation of American involvement in Vietnam. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, a 17-year old girl burned herself to death in Nha Trang in protest of the administration. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, the military finally turned against Hương and orchestrated a bloodless coup toppling the administration.<sup>113</sup> In the released AFC statement, the military had assessed that “the civil government... could not deal with the demands of the urgent situation of the present,” thus had to “act... to resolve the chaos, return order to the situation, and elected General Nguyễn Khánh with this responsibility.” The statement further charged Khanh with the responsibility of “convening a Civil-Military Council composed of 20 individuals representing each religion, notables from the peripheries, and representatives of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.” This organ would be responsible for advising the new administration “in important matters” as well as convening the National Assembly by the pre-assigned date of March 21<sup>st</sup>. The Provisional Charter remained in effect.<sup>114</sup> Phan Khắc Sửu was retained as Head of State and Nguyễn Xuân Oánh was named acting Premier.<sup>115</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> of February, a new civil administration was inaugurated with Dr. Phan Huy Quát—a Đại Việt Party member—as its Premier.

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<sup>111</sup> Per the Provisional Charter, legitimacy of civil rule rested on the HNC which elects a Chairman who would then serve as the Head of State. That Head of State would appoint a Premier who then selects his own cabinet. Phan Khắc Sửu and Trần Văn Hương explicitly acknowledged that the lack of a legislative body with equivalent powers to the HNC would mean the end of civil rule in their Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> Statement (Phủ Quốc trưởng thông cáo: Các nhà lãnh đạo đã và còn đang hết sức cố gắng tìm phương thức dung hòa quan điểm,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 30, 1964.

<sup>112</sup> “U.S. to Viet: End Politics Or Lose Aid: Saigon, *Boston Globe*, Dec 23, 1964; “Policy Opposing Military Control Is Reiterated, *The Sun*, Dec 23, 1964; “Gen. Khanh, Buddhist Enemy Join in Viet Criticism of U.S.” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jan 22, 1965; “PLUS AND MINUS OF VIET NAM'S 'INSIDIOUS WAR,'” *Boston Globe*, Dec 24, 1964; “Khanh: Cong Can't Win...but,” *Boston Globe*, Jan 22, 1965; “Red's Threat Is Political, Khanh Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan 22, 1965; “Buddhists Insult U.S.” *Boston Globe*, Jan 30, 1965; Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 77-78,

<sup>113</sup> “MARTIAL LAW IN SAIGON AND HUE,” *The Guardian*, Jan 26, 1965; “Viet Generals Seize Power,” *Boston Globe*, Jan 27, 1965;

<sup>114</sup> “Tin Giờ Chót,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 28, 1965.

<sup>115</sup> “Tin Giờ Chót,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 30, 1965.

The opposition to the Hương administration sat at the cusp between the populist and chaotic mobilization of the August riots and the conservative shift in the political discourse in reaction to the PNSC movement. Indeed, early on, virtually every political group sought to resolve the issue through legal and official channels. Even the students stayed from protests until 18 days after the Hương cabinet was inaugurated. The full resurgence of “taking it to the streets” only came after the December coup, American intervention in Vietnamese domestic politics, and the persistence of the Hương administration. For the most part, protests were exclusively a Buddhist affair. Catholics, early on, had opposed any form of public disturbance and in early December reiterated that position.<sup>116</sup> As protests renewed after the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, *Xây Dựng* ran a daily column similar to what it did in October of 1964 regarding the PNSC. It decried the anti-government protests citing communist manipulation, alleged attacks against nationalist parties, and likened the mobilization against Hương to that of the PNSC.<sup>117</sup> Some 20 oppositional nationalist groups had joined with Nguyễn Xuân Chữ to form the “People’s Revolutionary Council” in late November to wage struggle peacefully. These groups, for the most part, stayed from involving themselves in Buddhist demands and continually called for methods of struggle other than protests.<sup>118</sup> What must be noted is that, although these groups did not join the protests nor acknowledged these protests, other civil components also criticized American involvement in following in the December Coup<sup>119</sup> and the disbandment of the HNC faced virtually no resistance within the South Vietnamese press nor by any public statement from these groups.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Cộng Đồng Giáo Dân VN Tuyên Cáo: Cương Quyết Chống Biểu Tình, không phụng sự 1 cá nhân nào” *Tự Do*, Dec. 7, 1964.

<sup>117</sup> BBPV, “Miền Trung Chống Cộng SOS!” *Xây Dựng*, Jan. 15-30, 1965.

<sup>118</sup> “Hội Đồng Dân Tộc Cách Mạng Gồm Có 20 Đoàn Thể Chính Trị và Dân Chúng,” *Tự Do*, Nov. 30, 1964; “Việt Nam Phục Quốc Hội Ủng Hộ Thủ Tướng Trần V. Hương Những yêu cầu thay đổi một vài Tổng Trưởng,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 2, 1964; “Lực Lượng Liên Kết Đầu Tranh Kêu Gọi: Thủ Tướng Hãy Bình Tĩnh, các Chính Khắc Đối Lập Hãy Thận Trọng,” *Tự Do*, Dec. 5, 1964.

<sup>119</sup> Từ Chung—the Newsroom Secretary of *Chính Luận*—wrote a biting editorial in January following what amounted to widespread condemnation of the December Coup in the Western Press. In the face of opposition by the Young Turks and Khanh, American journalists continually referenced the “1.5 million dollars a day” that America poured into the anticommunist war (“Believe Generals Aim for Recall of Taylor,” *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 24, 1964; “US in disarray over Vietnam coup: Aid plans suspended,” *The Guardian*, Dec 24, 1964; “As We See it: A Gold Opportunity to Get out of Vietnam,” *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 24, 1964). One article in the *Chicago Tribune* made this matter poignant: “The military leaders who boss South Vietnam are simply remittance men on the United States payroll.” These men receive “American infusions of 2 million dollars a day, and without the support and guidance of 22,500 American military advisers, they and the parody of government which they operate probably would not last a week” (“None of Your Sass,” *Chicago Tribune*, Dec 24, 1964). The actions of Taylor was defended as one pushed by consistent regime changes and frustration in attempting to “assist a people who have proved so incapable of self-government that they substitute multi-faceted civil war.” Recent event had forced America from “a bystander role in a free-for-all in which South Vietnam’s national future is the least of considerations” (“As We See it: A Gold Opportunity to Get out of Vietnam,” *Detroit Free Press*, Dec. 24, 1964) to one in which “Taylor, with the support of the US Government, seems to be fighting almost alone to preserve civilian control of the Saigon Government” (“US in disarray over Vietnam coup: Aid plans suspended,” *The Guardian*, Dec 24, 1964). Từ Chung responded in kind: “Americans citizens only know how to pay taxes, but how American aid is utilized, the Americans do not care. American citizens only cry out when those who receive the aid do not show their gratefulness” (Từ Chung, “Cần đề phòng khuynh hướng chủ bại ở Mỹ,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 15, 1965); see also: “Nữ kỹ giả Mỹ bình luận tình hình Việt Nam: các nhà nhũ trách Mỹ ở Saigon và Hoa Thịnh Đốn Không Thông suốt tình hình nên mới đòi lập lại THĐ,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 4, 1965.

<sup>120</sup> One day after the December Coup, Catholics released a statement declaring full support for the Young Generals and their actions. The Central Committee for Catholic Struggle issued a statement in support of the AFC. They praised

The collapse of the Hương administration, however, demonstrated the magnitude of Buddhist political power in South Vietnam—almost single-handedly forcing a situation that required the military to orchestrate a coup to stabilize the national situation. This demonstration of power, however, caused a reaction amongst more conservative groups in the South Vietnamese civil society—particularly the Catholics—who saw Buddhist political prowess as determining the life and death of regimes. Moreover, Catholics were progressively increasing their negation of the “revolutionary” discourse that had been dominant since November of 1963. Building on the PNSC crisis, *Xây Dựng* wrote in mid-January questioned “how many people who opposed the Ngô Đình Diệm regime only did so to satisfy their own ambitions.” Moreover, the paper blamed the recent crisis on the inability of administrations to place anticommunism as the “main priority” and suggested that only those with anticommunist rapport from the “last 10 years” be included in the administration.<sup>121</sup> Following the attacks on USIS libraries in Saigon and Huế, *Xây Dựng* implied that such activities went against the Vietnamese “4000 years of civilization” and depicted the chaos as resulting from a “minority.”<sup>122</sup> And from early on, Catholics rejected its own involvement in the Quát administration, decried any forms of political instability—implicating the January 27<sup>th</sup> coup—as potentially beneficial to the enemy, and opposed a government that was brought into power through political influence—implicating the Buddhist insurrection.<sup>123</sup> The newly proposed National Legislative Council—to be composed of representatives from all major religions—faced stagnant Catholic opposition, pointing to the forgotten promise of removing “politics from religion.” *Xây Dựng* argued that the chaos of the times was precisely due to lack of confidence that the people had in national leaders and politicians, thus “relied on religious communities to resolve the issues of the nation, increasingly weakening the legitimacy of the nation.”<sup>124</sup>

As the nation transitions into the period under national leadership of Dr. Trần Huy Quát, the Catholics began growing in political prominence, focusing its mobilization activities to push for a stronger anticommunist agenda and a more legitimate state. This rise was undoubtedly fueled by opposition to the emerging “peace movements” that shook Republican politics from February through May. And in late May, it was the Catholics—rather than the Buddhists—who created the political instability that would lead to the end of the Quát administration.

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the December coup as the “goodwill of the military in excising communist element that had infiltrated the infrastructure of the nation...[and] the determination of the military to not nurture ambitions of returning to power and respecting the [Provisional] Charter.” According to *Chính Luận*, although not specifying who these “communist” elements were in the HNC, it had been acknowledged in recent declarations by the Catholics that Lê Khắc Quyền and Tân Thất Hanh—both members of the HNC—were PSC leaders whose agitation allowed for the chaos and communist advance in the central region in October. (“Trung Ương Tranh Đấu Công Giáo Tuyên Cáo: ủng Hộ Hội Đồng Quân Lực,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 24, 1964). Unarrested HNC members stated that the dismantling of the HNC was inevitable given its composition and the politicians within its ranks (“Sau Khi Thượng Hội Đồng bị lật đổ...[censored] một số cụ thượng...[censored] ủng hộ việc làm của HĐQL,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 22, 1964); Virtually all the units of the South Vietnamese military—particularly peripheral forces in Darlac, An Xuyên, Kontum—also came in support of the coup (Các Đơn Vị và các tiểu khu toàn quốc ủng hộ Hội Đồng Quân Lực,” *Chính Luận*, Dec. 31, 1964).

<sup>121</sup> “Tại Sao Không Thở lấy Tinh Thần, Công Lao Chống Cộng 10 Năm Qua Lâm Tiểu Chuẩn Chính Yếu,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan 16, 1965; Another editorial decried that the anticommunist war was based on “awaiting for the determination of the American government, whether to continue the anticommunist war or retreat from Vietnam (“Phải Tạo hoàn cảnh, điều kiện cho nhân dân trực tiếp tham gia chống cộng,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan 21, 1965);

<sup>122</sup> “Phản ứng nhẹ nhàng nhưng thâm thía,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan. 26, 1965

<sup>123</sup> “Thái Độ của Khối Công Giáo Đối Với Biến Chính 27-1-65,” *Xây Dựng*, Feb. 6, 1965.

<sup>124</sup> “Tại Sao Việc thành lập HĐQT Gặp Nhiều Khó Khăn,” *Xây Dựng*, Feb. 9, 1965.

*“Peace Movements” and the Resurgence of Anti-Neutralism*

The second issue of *Chánh Đạo* came out on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1965. In its editorial column were big, bolded words “Hòa Bình!” *Peace!* Edited by the Deputy Director of the Buddhist Chaplain Corp, Thích Hộ Giác, *Chánh Đạo* was the new Buddhist news organ after the original Buddhist periodical, *Hải Triều Âm*, was closed down in September of 1964 for purportedly calling for cessation of violence between communist and anticommunist combatants.<sup>125</sup> The piece by *Chánh Đạo* in March proposed 3 possibilities of “peace”: “peace through victory” over communist forces, “peace through decision making of international leaders,” or “peace through which the people of Vietnam actualize themselves and, after, forcing international leaders to respect and guarantee that peace.” The question was not peace or war, but rather how that peace will be achieved and whether that peace can be guaranteed. Harkening back to long established narratives about “communist peace,” the editorial asked:

“But will the Viet Cong [guerrillas] have autonomy [from the government in Hà Nội]? Or will they be the wheels of an enormous Communist machine? To ask is to already answer. Because of this, to call upon peace with the Viet Cong at this time is a meaningless call, one without effect.”<sup>126</sup>

This position somewhat differed from another approach to “peace” that was undergoing within the Buddhist community during this period. Thích Quảng Liên—a leader in the Unified Buddhist Church—formed the “Struggle Movement for the Protection of Peace and Happiness” (SMPPH) in late February. Thích Quảng Liên’s movement publicly emerged alongside a number of other “peace organizations” following the first South Vietnamese bombing mission above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel in early February.<sup>127</sup> Two of these organizations—both secular—were quickly suppressed, deemed to be “fake peace” organizations which sought to “neutralize” the South. These two organizations—the Movement for Self-Determination and, its offshoot, the Peace Movement Committee—were brought to trial on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August and many of their members were sentenced imprisonment and forced labor.<sup>128</sup> Three of their leaders had been deported above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel in mid-March but were eventually exiled to France.<sup>129</sup>

Thích Quảng Liên’s movement, on the other hand, was not suppressed by the Quát administration but was legally recognized as a “nationalist” organization which allowed it to

<sup>125</sup> Topmiller, p. 25; originally cited in James Forest, *Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam*, 6.

<sup>126</sup> “Thấy và Nghĩ: Hòa Bình!” *Chánh Đạo*, Mar. 7, 1965.

<sup>127</sup> The link between first aerial bombardment by South Vietnamese forces above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel and the rise of the peace movement was first made by the Quát administration: “‘Phong Trào Dân Tộc Tự Quyết’ vừa bị khám phá là tổ chức cộng sản trá hình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 1, 1965

<sup>128</sup> “Phiên xử 21 bị can trọng vụ ‘Phong Trào Dân Tộc Tự Quyết’ và ‘Ủy Ban Hòa Bình,’” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 3, 1965; “Tòa án lại ‘sôi động’ và những phút chót,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 6, 1965.

<sup>129</sup> The three men—Tôn Thất Dương Ky, Dr. Phạm Văn Huyền, and journalist Cao Minh Chiêm—were originally to be “parachuted” off into North Vietnam (“Độc Báo: Thả Dù 3 ông Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 17, 1965, org. cited in *Sống và Tiếng Vang*). However, the three “communist sympathizing peace activists” were simply deported across the Hiền Lương Bridge which divided Vietnam at the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel (Giữa tiếng la 6 nguyên rủa của đồng bào 3 trí thức bệnh hoạn làm lũi qua cầu Bến Hải,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 22, 1965). Their departure from North Vietnam to France, see: “Các Lực Lượng Chống Cộng Bảo Động Việt Cộng Đã Suất cảng 3 ‘ông’ Hòa Bình qua Pháp,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 14, 1965.

continue operating.<sup>130</sup> As a sanctioned organization, the SMPPH became the first crucial challenge the notion of “peace” bounded to the narratives of anti-neutralism and the rejection of the Geneva Accords established since 1955. If the reader would recall, when it came to the Geneva Accords, the Diệm administration had long argued that “peace” was the desire of the South Vietnamese, but the Vietnamese people rejected the “peace” offered by the communists and maintained adamancy in defending their country from communist aggression.<sup>131</sup>

In its first communique, the SMPHH argued that that there were two roads for Vietnam: one was through the “fire of war [that will bring] the people into extinction” and the other was to “build happiness for the entirety of citizenry in peace and prosperity.” The war was expanding, the communique argued. That war had reached the North—implicitly critiquing the recent Vietnamese-American joint bombing missions above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel—and “each day [that war] was increasing in intensity.” The SMPPH called for all military forces to cease their activities, Soviet and Chinese forces were to leave North Vietnam, the retreat of communist forces from the South, American forces to leave South Vietnam and a “reconciliation committee” was to be established to negotiate the reunification of the nation.<sup>132</sup>

Thích Quảng Liên, on the one hand, stated his opposition to the neutralization of South Vietnam, but his movement, on the other hand, effectively called for a ceasefire, removal of foreign troops, reunification, and negotiated settlement—not unlike the secular peace organizations that were already shutdown. While calling for a ceasefire, the SMPPH reiterated the established discursive conventions around the Geneva Accords. The war, the movement argued, was “brought about by the Hà Nội government.” Yet, rather than retaliating against this war, the SMPPH called upon Hà Nội to pull their troops back to the north. For the organization, demanding those who created the war to end that was the civic duty of South Vietnamese citizens. Whether the organization was recognized by the northern government is not the issue; rather, the SMPHH simply is making an effort to push toward a long-desired peace. The movement, furthermore, targeted the “nationalist” elements in the NLF, or those who had opposed the Diệm administration, were persecuted, thus fled into communist territories and joined the NLF. Those nationalists would be called upon to negotiate peace in Vietnam.<sup>133</sup>

Rather than a departure from the position of the Unified Buddhist Church, the calls for peace, ceasefire, and the end to war conformed to statements made by Thích Tâm Châu at the

<sup>130</sup> “Thượng Tọa Tâm Châu nhắc nhở đồng bào Phật tử,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 4, 1965.

<sup>131</sup> The Geneva Accords was a policy imposed on the country of Vietnam that was devised by the “French colonialist” and the Vietnamese communists. The communists were deceptive and traitorous, and their violation of that Accords—a document in which they signed—had sparked the resumption of war in the country. The South Vietnamese—those who truly love peace—did not sign the Accords but abided by them anyhow in the hopes of maintaining peace. The idea of “peaceful coexistence,” as one political study document had argued, was a communist scheme fleshed out by the Soviet Union to gradually dominate through communist propaganda. “Peace”—even during the First Republic—was a communist mobilizing call to deceive the international audience of communism’s atrocity and bloodthirst. By such, the South Vietnamese must adopt a “resolute” attitude towards neutralism—particularly calls for neutralism in Indochina and Vietnam (See Chapter 2).

<sup>132</sup> “Tuyên Cáo số 1 của Phong trào Tranh Đấu Bảo Vệ Hòa Bình Hạnh Phúc Dân Tộc,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 10-11, 1965; Mentions of American troop withdrawals were censored from the South Vietnamese press. English-language reports, see: “On demands of American retreat: Viet Buddhists Plan Attempt to Oust GIs,” *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 28, 1965; “Viet Buddhists Plan Attempt to Oust GIs,” *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 28, 1965; “Campaign to end war in Vietnam,” *The Guardian*, Mar 1, 1965;

<sup>133</sup> “Phong trào tranh Đấu Bảo Vệ Hòa Bình Hạnh Phúc Dân Tộc: Bắt Đầu vận Động Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 10, 1965.

beginning of 1965. In a February statement, the Reverend dedicated the year 1965 to prayer for “the country to quickly reach peace, returning to conditions similar to 1955: those who approve of Socialist Communism go the North; those who approve of freedom and nationalism enter the South, ending all forms of disruption and war.”<sup>134</sup> Similar to Thích Tâm Châu, Thích Trí Quang—leader of the militant faction in the UBC—argued in an interview that the recent “retaliation” conducted by the South Vietnamese military “will not bring about a positive result, and neither would attacking the enemy in foreign policy and politics....[W]e must have the two sides negotiate.”<sup>135</sup> Like the SMPPH, Thích Trí Quang called for the retreat of communist forces to the north and the movement of nationalist forces to the south—in essence, reestablishing the conditions of the 1954 Geneva Accords.<sup>136</sup> Indeed, what SMPPH provided was a political program to enact these “peace” visions.

However, as soon as the SMPPH entered public discussion, Thích Tâm Châu quickly distanced the UBC from the movement arguing that it was “the individual work of Thích Quảng Liên, and not under the name of the Church.”<sup>137</sup> This move came about during an environment of increasing boldness on the part of rigidly conservative voices. Documents captured from guerrilla forces in early January had publicized an allegedly new campaign of communist propaganda centered around creating internal chaos in the South, the manipulation of students and religion, and—most importantly—centering propaganda on “demanding peace, democracy, and ousting Americans.”<sup>138</sup> Whether by design or accidental, the SMPPH fell neatly into this alleged campaign. Reception by the general South Vietnamese public was tepid at best. *Chính Luận*, for example, reported that South Vietnamese reporters at the SMPPH’s first public press conference were “reserved regarding the activities of this movement.”<sup>139</sup> Only some 70 individuals attended the conference.<sup>140</sup> And responses from the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo were far from enthusiastic.<sup>141</sup>

More hardline voices were found elsewhere. Quát had received international attention for stating that Vietnam was “suffering too much” and “we want to end the war with honor.”<sup>142</sup> This, in the Western-press, was taken within the context of the emerging peace movements in South Vietnam as well as continued peace overtures by the French Government whose Foreign Minister recently urged on American television negotiations for a settlement in Vietnam “as soon

<sup>134</sup> Reported in *Vận Hội Mới* on Feb. 23, 1965 (“Độc Báo,” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 26, 1965); “Thông Bạch cùng toàn thể đồng bào Phật Tử,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 4, 1965.

<sup>135</sup> “Chiến thắng đối với chúng ta là phải làm thế nào cho CS rút lui một cách êm thấm khỏi Nam VN. Sự kiện đó có thể diễn ra ở miền Nam hơn là việc Miền Nam tấn công ra Bắc...Chúng tôi cũng không cần biết là sự giải quyết đó chính thức hay không chính thức, chúng tôi chỉ muốn cho dân tộc VN cắt được cái gánh nặng khổ đau kia. Nếu sự việc không diễn tiến thwo đường lối đó, tôi sự tình trạng sẽ đi đến chỗ bi đặc hơn nữa,” (“Độc Báo,” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 27, 1965 citing interview conducted by *Tiếng Vang*). Thích Trí Quang also acknowledged the peace overtures of Shastri of India and Sato of Japan.

<sup>136</sup> “BUDDHIST PRIEST MAY HOLD KEY TO VIETNAM'S FUTURE,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 28, 1965

<sup>137</sup> “Thượng Tọa Tâm Châu nhắc nhở đồng bào Phật Tử,” *Chính Luận*, March 4, 1965.

<sup>138</sup> “Chính Quyền kêu gọi đồng bào đề cao cảnh giác vì Việt Cộng Sẽ Áp Dụng Tại Thủ Đô Chiến Thuật ‘3 Mặt Giáp Công,’” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 9, 1965.

<sup>139</sup> “Phong Trào tranh Đấu Bảo Vệ Hòa Bình Hạnh Phúc Dân Tộc: Bắt Đầu vận Động Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 10, 1965.

<sup>140</sup> “Campaign to end war in Vietnam,” *The Guardian*, Mar 1, 1965

<sup>141</sup> “Ý Kiến của các Giáo Hội về Cuộc Vận Động của TT Quảng Liên,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 13, 1965.

<sup>142</sup> “Saigon Premier Cites Suffering But Notes Foe's Communist Aim,” *New York Times*, Feb 25, 1965

as possible.”<sup>143</sup> Quát on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, argued that Reuter—which originally ran the piece—had mistranslated his words. Rather than “suffering too much” or “end the war with honor,” Quát stated that he said “the people of Vietnam were a peace-loving people, but at the same time were a people determined to protect their right to live in freedom.”<sup>144</sup> In his speech correcting the translation, Quát expressed his determination to “destroy all schemes and deception of the communists” and their “fake peace” movements. He harkened the right of the Vietnamese people to determine their own fates and not place their country’s future in the hands of international powers—whether it be France or the United Nations. Maintaining the long adamancy against Geneva Accords, Quát responded to question suggesting the reimplementation of 1954’s condition with: “We must make it clear especially internationally....[that] the Geneva Accords of 1954 divided the country of Vietnam, giving the North to the communists....[and] the Republic of Vietnam only retained half in South Vietnam.” The Premier argued that Hà Nội did not enact the measures of the Accords—an Accord that “they had signed”—and the country returned to war. For those who want to reimplement the Geneva Accords, stated Quát, “please review the historical lesson...and we ask do not place upon the peace-loving people of Vietnam the negative label of war-making.”<sup>145</sup>

Despite the adamance of the speech, however, Quát did not take legal measures against the SMPPH—which would effectively mean taking measures against the key members within the leadership of the UBC who had, at one point, advocated similar proposals. The Quát administration’s treatment of the SMPHH and Thích Quảng Liên was incredibly lax. Thích Quảng Liên was granted permission by the Quát administration to travel to Hà Nội as a “private citizen,”<sup>146</sup> though he never took the offer. The Reverend eventually also sent a letter to Hồ Chí Minh—as well as the American President, the Saigon Archbishop, and Quát—to explain his proposal for peace and call for the retreat of troops. This too was met without repercussion. Like his secular counterparts, Thích Quảng Liên would eventually end up in France, allowed to travel in early April citing illness treatment.<sup>147</sup> The military—which had vowed support for the Quát administration—came in defense of the SMPHH. Ironically, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ—who eventually led the military forces against protesting Buddhists just a year later—argued in a press conference that while “those who are demanding peace...intends to join hands with the communists,” there was “no reason to criticize” the organization of Thích Quảng Liên.<sup>148</sup>

The legality of the SMPHH, however, did not prevent the organization from being widely opposed in civil society. Within the Buddhist Church, pressures were placed on the Reverend to leave the organization or be removed from the Buddhist hierarchy. A monk, according to the Church, “should only be concerned with religious matters and only have the right to act secularly

<sup>143</sup> “French Official Asks Talks to Stop War,” *New York Times*, Feb 22, 1965

<sup>144</sup> “DENY VIET NAM’S PRIME MINISTER MADE PEACE BID,” *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 26, 1965.

<sup>145</sup> “Tuyên Cáo của Chánh Phủ VNCH,” *Chính luận*, Mar. 3, 1965; “Các Vấn Đề nêu lên đều được giải quyết êm ru,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 3, 1965.

<sup>146</sup> “U.S. Postpones Landing of Marines in Vietnam,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 5, 1965

<sup>147</sup> “TT Quảng Liên thuyết pháp trước khi xuất ngoại,” *Chính Luận*, April 14, 1965.

<sup>148</sup> “HQQL công bố cải tổ cơ cấu và thành phần lãnh đạo,” *Chính Luận*, March 5, 1965; Thích Quảng Liên statement number 1: “Tuyên Cáo số 1 của Phong Trào Tranh Đấu Bảo Vệ Hòa Bình Hạnh Phúc Dân Tộc,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 10, 1965. Phạm Văn Liệu on Thích Quảng Liên: “nếu có ai cho rằng các Vị sư là thân Cộng hoặc là Cộng Sản, thì những kẻ đó đã lầm lẫn vô cùng. Chính tôi đã từng nhắc nhở cùng các Vị ấy rằng, phải nên coi chừng, kẻo có CS lợi dụng trà trộn vào hàng ngũ.”



when the Religion is threatened.”<sup>149</sup> The Buddhist Youth League sent out a communique stating that the organization would “remove all Buddhist youths who join peace organizations.”<sup>150</sup> In the general news, reports pointed to the “unclear” nature in which the SMPHH existed amidst government’s crackdown on “fake peace” organizations.<sup>151</sup> *Chính Luận*’s newsroom secretary—Từ Chung—wrote, quite early on, a lengthy thesis arguing that the world was no longer talking about “neutralizing” South Vietnam, but the new battle cry for the communists was “peace.” Indeed, during this period, “peace” became seen as a slogan for a communist-induced scheme to achieve an end result that “neutralism” could not. Peace, for Từ Chung, was not a question of “honor” as Western reporters had deemed, but rather whether there is “true peace” or “fake peace.” One manner of “peace” came through victory over communism, and the other came through negotiations. The latter was “fake” in that the peace offered through negotiations with the enemy would eventually lead to continued war—as seen through the historical experience of the 1954 Geneva Accords.<sup>152</sup>

By the end of March, anti-neutralism was resurging in South Vietnam. *Chính Luận* began advertising slogans such as “There is no peace when there are still Viet Congs” and “Communist Peace is Peace in Slavery” on its front page. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Cao Đài ousted 6 of its leaders from the religion body citing for “organizing and propagandizing.” Amongst those ousted was Phạm Duy Nhung who had advocated for “coexistence with communists.”<sup>153</sup> On the 24<sup>th</sup>, 665 “notables, editors, journalists, and veterans” presented Quát with a document demanding a “resolute attitude” towards all “peace movements”—including the SMPPF. The document argued that peace organizations are “clearing the way for communist infiltration of South Vietnam.” Similar to Từ Chung, the communique separated the “fake peace” organizations which called for ceasefire and the “true peace” nationalists which, “because of their love for peace,” must fight against “communist infiltrators, the henchmen of international communism.” A “resolute” position against these peace organizations, the document argued, would clarify the South Vietnamese position towards peace and “illuminate that Anticommunism and Anti-neutralism continues to be seen as a national policy.”<sup>154</sup>

In early April, 18 religious, political, trade and youth organizations issued a communique protesting ongoing “peace movements” emerging in France. The distributed communique recalled the history of French colonialism and Vietnamese resistance, tying it to contemporary issues of neutralism and “peace” activism. Reactionary elements in France were charged with attempting to return as a colonial power to Indochina. And France, itself, for harboring communist agents who schemed to neutralize Vietnam.<sup>155</sup> In mid-April, another set of communiques were sent out protesting France’s protection of the 3 peace activists who were deported from South Vietnam. The document called upon the Quát administration to adopt a

<sup>149</sup> “Thôi làm chính trị để trở về lại đạo,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 29, 1965.

<sup>150</sup> “Thôi làm chính trị để trở về lại đạo,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 29, 1965.

<sup>151</sup> “Phù hợp với ý chí quyết thắng đang lên cao, Chính Phủ quyết định đặt ra ngoài vòng pháp luật mọi phong trào chủ bại mệnh danh là Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 31, 1965

<sup>152</sup> For the author, there was only 2 acceptable resolution to the war; the first was a long, worn out fight until the NLF is destroyed, or a long, worn out fight until the NLF retreats. There was no “quick” solution for Từ Chung. South Vietnam must prepare itself for the long haul (Từ Chung, “Vấn Đề Văn Hòi Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 9, 1965).

<sup>153</sup> “Giáo Hội Cao Đài Trục Xuất 6 Vị Chức sắc ra khỏi đạo,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 23, 1965.

<sup>154</sup> “665 người công bố bản tuyên ngôn,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 26, 1965

<sup>155</sup> “Nhiều Chính Đảng, Đoàn Thể, Tôn Giáo, Chính Trị, Nghề Nghiệp...lập tuyên ngôn” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 9, 1965.

“resolute attitude” towards France for allowing these activities. If not, the communique threatened, the “people of Vietnam...will be forced to stand up...[and] the security and property of the colonialists...will not be guaranteed.”<sup>156</sup> By late April, Đà Nẵng residents had initiated an “Anti-France Movement” which paralleled De Gaulle to Hồ Chí Minh and threatened French properties in the region,<sup>157</sup> the UBC had taken a hardline position against communist actions,<sup>158</sup> and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ had revived the call for the “Northward March” by promoting a “National Front to Liberate the North.”<sup>159</sup>

The most vocal within the new wave of anti-neutralism and anticommunist adamancy was the Catholic. In late January, the Center for Catholic Struggle renamed itself the Greater Unity Force (GUF).<sup>160</sup> The refashioning of the Catholic organization came about as procedures for national and municipal elections were set, and, by the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, the Catholics had two electorally based parties—Christian Democrats (led by Nguyễn Gia Hiến) and the National Union (led by Fr. Hồ Văn Vui). Both were created amidst the rise of anti-neutralist sentiments and were supported by the GUF.<sup>161</sup> In mid-March, the GUF were amongst the first to come out adamantly against *all* “peace movements.” Indeed, unlike Quát, the GUF identified the SMPPF—by name—in its communique and categorizes the organization alongside already-suppressed “fake peace” movements. According to the GUF, each of these had contributed to a litany of negative consequences for the anticommunist war including creating disillusionment within the military, paralyzing anticommunist and anti-neutralist efforts, allowing international parties to discount the determination of the Vietnamese people, and “opening the roads to negotiation leading to neutralism and benefitting the communists.”<sup>162</sup> The subsequent anti-neutralist activities by nationalist groups in March and April were attended—if not organized—by the GUF or its youth subsidiary, the Pioneer Revolutionary Youth Force and anti-neutralist communiques demanding a “resolute attitude” towards France and the SMPPF include the signature of Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh.

<sup>156</sup> “Các Lực Lượng Chống Cộng Báo Động: Việt Cộng Đã Cuất cẳng 3 ‘ông’ Hòa Bình qua Pháp,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 14, 1965.

<sup>157</sup> “Đà Nẵng Phát Động Phong Trào Chống Pháp Khẩu Hiệu đã đảo khắp tỉnh,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 22, 1965.

<sup>158</sup> “Sau Khi nhiều Tăng Ni Phật Tử bị VC bắt bớ, khủng bố, sát hại, Giáo Hội Phật Giáo VNTN Phản Đối,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 23, 1965

<sup>159</sup> “Song song với việc thành lập MTQGGPMB, Thiếu Tướng Kỳ đề nghị,” *Chính Luận*, May 1, 1965; Symbolic of the Northward March ideals, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April—in commemoration of the First Emperor of Vietnam (a traditional national holiday—a military parade was orchestrated at the Republic Square attended by high ranking generals, Quát, and Taylor. Soldiers entered a formation resembling the entirety of Vietnam. The soldiers symbolizing the southern half raised yellow fabric above their heads while the soldiers symbolizing the northern half raised red fabric. After three chants of “Northward March,” the soldiers of the northern half lowered their sheets and replaced them with yellow one, thus creating a singular, unified “yellow” Vietnam (“Dưới Quyền chủ tọa của Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, Ngày Giỗ Tổ Năm Nay Mang Ý Chí ‘Bắc tiến, Bắt Phạt,’” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 13, 1965.

<sup>160</sup> “Thông Cáo số 11,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan 21, 1965. Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh had a very different reaction to the February Vietnamese-American bombing mission than his Buddhist counterparts. In an interview with the newspaper *Saigon Tân Văn*, the priest praised the South Vietnamese and American Air Forces which “dared” to act “determinedly” (“Độc Báo,” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 15, 1965).

<sup>161</sup> “Các Lực Lượng Công Giáo Lập Hai Chánh Đảng để tranh cử Quốc Hội,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 23, 1965.

<sup>162</sup> “Trung Ương Công Giáo Đại Đoàn Kết Lên Tiếng,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 18, 1965.

Officially not a “political party,”<sup>163</sup> the GUF nevertheless sought entry into the upcoming National Assembly through elections.<sup>164</sup> In the opening ceremony of the organization, leaders stated that the GUF supported American presence, called for the arming of its members to fight communism, and desired the “Northward March as quickly as possible.” Structurally, the GUF divided itself into two key branches: its secular wing—chaired by Nguyễn Gia Hiến—and its religious wing—led by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh. Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh technically serves as an “advisor” to the secular branch, though the activities and politics of the organization was clearly in the hands of the priest.<sup>165</sup> Although the GUF did not directly criticize the Quát administration during its opening ceremony, their opposition to the government was made clear in a statement distributed in early May following an enormous silent procession in commemoration of the anticommunist fallen. A conference was held chaired by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May which criticized the Quát administration for failing to demonstrate the “nationalist” credentials of the SMPPH, the imprisonment and demotion of anticommunist military and administrative personnel and rise of the black market. The statement argued that these matters had led to the “weakening” of anticommunism in South Vietnam. The GUF demanded a stronger anticommunist policy on the part of the administration, the establishment of the National Assembly, and the condemnation of all “putrid, bureaucratic, [and] discriminatory elements...who work as the intermediary henchmen for the communists.”<sup>166</sup>

As Catholics established themselves on the political stage, other conservative components were organizing as well. The “National Anticommunist Bloc” was formed in late April headed by Dr. Hoàng Cơ Bình—the man who had served as the anti-neutralist voice of the Council of Sages in January of 1963 and had organized the major conference in opposition to the PNSC in October. Represented in this political front were the VNQDD, the Việt Nam Phục Quốc Hội, as well as military leaders from the Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo religions. The organization presented itself as a political voice oppositional to the Quát administration. Like the Catholics, the Anticommunist Bloc called for stronger anticommunist policies, sought to campaign for seats in the National Assembly, opposed the “peace movements” including that of Thích Quảng Liên, and pushed for a greater war effort. In mid-May, the Bloc joined with the GUF in their conference publicizing opposition to Quát. By the end of May, Hoàng Cơ Bình was elected as a city council member coming in second for the municipal elections for Saigon District 1.<sup>167</sup>

The Đại Việt Party—once politically ousted by Khánh—was also returning to the political stage. In late 1964, after Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn was exiled from South Vietnam, the Đại Việt Party was split into two main factions: one led by Hà Thúc Kỳ (the Đại Việt Cách Mạng Đảng—the original party) and one led Lê Văn Hiệp (the newly formed Tân Đại Việt). Both of these organizations waged campaigns for electoral seats beginning in May. Staunchly

<sup>163</sup> “Lực Lượng Đại Đoàn Kết Không Phải là Một Đảng Chính Trị,” *Xây Dựng*, Apr. 26, 1965.

<sup>164</sup> “Trong Buổi Tiếp tân ra mắt chủ tịch Lực Lượng Đoàn Kết Tuyên Bô,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 24, 1965.

<sup>165</sup> The headquarters of the GUF secular wing was the same as its Catholic wing. GUF meetings are presided over by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh rather than Nguyễn Gia Hiến (“Trong Buổi Tiếp tân ra mắt chủ tịch Lực Lượng Đoàn Kết Tuyên Bô,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 24, 1965; “Dưới Sự Chủ Tọa của LM Hoàng Quỳnh và Trước Đại Diện Báo Chí,” *Xây Dựng*, May 11, 1965;

<sup>166</sup> “Đại Hội LL Đại Đoàn Kết Lập Quyết Nghị Hoan Nghênh Giải Pháp Tán Công Bắc Việt,” *Chính Luận*, May 11, 1965.

<sup>167</sup> In arguably the most important race of the municipal elections (District 1 is the financial and political center of Saigon), Hoàng Cơ Bình trailed Giáp Văn Thập—who came in 1<sup>st</sup>—by just under 200 votes (“Kết Quả Cuộc Bầu Cử,” *Tự Do*, Jun. 1, 1965).

anticommunist, these organizations mobilized during a period of resurging anti-neutralist sentiments. Indeed, in mid-March—like multiple other civil components in South Vietnam—the Tân Đại Việt’s weekly newsletter issued a piece on “The Viet Cong’s Peace Offensive” which condemned peace movements as a communist scheme, opposed ceasefire, and adamancy against any form of negotiations.<sup>168</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, the Đại Việt Cách Mạng Đảng held demonstrations in Quảng Tín supporting Hà Thúc Kỳ’s “9-Point Plan,” calling for anticommunist and anti-neutralist policies as well as demands for a national assembly and a democratic constitution.<sup>169</sup> The Tân Đại Việt eventually were able to seize a number of provincial seats in the municipal elections on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May.<sup>170</sup> For the Đại Việt Cách Mạng Đảng, it is unclear what their successes were for the municipal elections, but demonstrations in support of Hà Thúc Kỳ continued until the end of May and placed a number of their members in the elections of 1966 and 1967.<sup>171</sup>

### *Anti-Neutrality in Context*

Until the Quát administration, anti-neutralist ideals and the South Vietnamese rejection of the Geneva Accords—narratives derived from the First Republic—were reutilized in novel ways through mobilization of diverse societal components of the Republic. Recall that in January of 1964, students had mobilized against French overtures for the neutralization of Southeast Asia. The RMC led by Dương Văn Minh was overthrown by allegations of “pro-neutralism and pro-France.” Advocating for neutralism in public was made a criminal offense under the Khánh administration. In July, students vandalized French statues, and burned a car in front of the French Embassy in protest of French neutralist policies. And, even the radical journal *Lập Trường*—which in September became the mouthpiece of the PNSC—ran articles defending themselves as anti-neutralist and espoused themes familiar to the dominant narrative.

Dimensions of anti-neutralism from the First Republic, was expanded on during the Interregnum. Rather than just a resoluteness to neutralist voices or condemning neutralism as a “path to communism” in Southeast Asia, anti-neutralism of the Interregnum highlighted

<sup>168</sup> The piece alleged that this “peace offensive” came about as Americans became increasingly “determined” in the anticommunist war evidenced by joint Vietnamese-American bombing raids to the North and attacks on the Hồ Chí Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia. To counteract this military offensive, the communists had returned to calls of “peace” and “relied on their compatriot which is France and Cambodia [to] chant for a new Geneva Conference, and call for the end of war.” Referring to the peace movements in the Republic, the piece argues that these cries for “peace” on the international stage paralleled a communist “mobilization of all their sleeper cells in the South to generate a movement demanding negotiation.” Like other organizations which opposed the “peace movements” in South Vietnam, Tân Đại Việt acknowledged that peace was “a desire of every Vietnamese” but “our freedom must be guaranteed” within that peace and can only come about once the communists “cease their infiltration of the South” (“Cuộc Tấn Công Hòa Bình của Việt Cộng,” *Tân Đại Việt: bản thông tin hàng tuần*, Mar. 13, 1965).

<sup>169</sup> Nguyễn Lý Tường, 373; “Mít Tinh Chống Cộng và Ủng Hộ Cách Mạng,” *Tự Do*, May 13, 1965; text of program: “Đảng Đại Việt Cách Mạng tuyên ngôn về chương trình,” *Tự Do*, Mar. 29, 1965.

<sup>170</sup> “Tin Nội Bộ,” *Tân Đại Việt: bản thông tin hàng tuần*, Jun. 6, 1965

<sup>171</sup> Constituent Assembly election in 1966: 9 Đại Việt out of 117 seats; For the Upper House elections in 1967, the Đại Việt seized 5<sup>th</sup> place winner; for the Lower House, it is unclear the percentage, but the Đại Việt were represented (Penniman, 37, 94-95, 100-101). Nguyễn Lý Tường was a Đại Việt student activist in 1965, working closely with Hà Thúc Kỳ and, at age 28, was elected as a representative of Thừa Thiên for the 1967-1971 National Assembly, Lower House. See his memoir, 376-382; 472

neutralism as foreign meddling in Vietnamese affairs.<sup>172</sup> Neutralization, “conferences” and “peace” overtures from France,<sup>173</sup> the United Nations,<sup>174</sup> and even from American diplomats<sup>175</sup> were lambasted on South Vietnamese newspapers as either falling prey to schemes of international communism or misunderstanding the circumstances of the anticommunist war.<sup>176</sup> Indeed, in his position against neutralism, Phan Huy Quát rejected any international proposals that were not first recognized and approved by his government and the Vietnamese people.<sup>177</sup> During the Interregnum, anti-neutralism magnified the question of Vietnamese political autonomy and the ability of the Vietnamese people to determine their own future.

During the Interregnum, those calls for “self-determination” greatly targeted the French President De Gaulle who rose to the forefront of South Vietnamese antipathy. Anti-neutralism only grew in adamancy throughout the Interregnum as De Gaulle reignited the push for neutralization of South Vietnam after every major political upheaval.<sup>178</sup> An international conversation that the South Vietnamese future was an object, calls for international conferences for the neutralization of Vietnam was interpreted as a measure that violated South Vietnamese

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<sup>172</sup> Recall that the issue of “self-determination” was not exclusive to the Interregnum. During the First Republic, “self-determination” was a crucial aspect of how the Diệm administration chose to cope with the problems of Vietnamese underdevelopment. Indeed, after 1958, Vietnamese self-determination was the basis of Diemist Personalist philosophy. Personalism was once pitched as an endogenous vision of Vietnamese modernity, catered to the specific political, economic, and social conditions of Vietnam. During the First Republic, the idea of “self-providing” *tự túc* targeted the underdeveloped economy of Vietnam; “self-determination” *tự quyết* targeted the lack of South Vietnamese aspirations in the Geneva Accords; and “self-reliance” *tự cường* was a slogan of the Strategic Hamlet project.

<sup>173</sup> In July, amidst anti-neutralist protests by students, and renewed neutralization overtures by U Thant and De Gaulle, the regular international analysis in *Tự Do* calls U Thant a “dead pawn” *con bài chết* without any real power to determine the actions of the UN. Opposition to De Gaulle by students is hailed as evidence that “Vietnam continues to hold the initiative—in dealing with France” (“De Gaulle, U Thant, Ân, Mỹ và sinh viên Việt Nam,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964). Following the August riots, *Tự Do* called for unity, arguing that “the French Government is now happily clapping their hands.” Chaos were proving De Gaulle correct, the newspaper warned (“Nếu Chúng Tôi là Cộng Sản,” *Tự Do*, Aug. 30, 1964; In May: “Lại Một Trò Pháp,” *Tự Do*, May 5, 1965.

<sup>174</sup> “Phản ứng của Việt Nam về hội nghị Geneve Mới: ô Thant vượt qua quyền hạn mình khi muốn bán đứng Việt nam cho CS.” *Tự Do*, July 7, 1964;

<sup>175</sup> *Tự Do* once editorialized on Cabot Lodge’s tour of Europe in which he reportedly argued that Vietnam was not an issue that could singularly resolved. The newspaper argued that this could be interpreted as advocating for “international discussion”—conjoining the conflict in Vietnam with a host of other international issues. This, argued the newspaper, must be opposed because “the people of Vietnam do not want anyone to eclipse them in matters which concern Vietnam.” American support of Vietnam, the article continued, had led the Vietnamese people to believe that “America had fought for the right for self-determination in general, and thus America can never step on the self determination of Vietnam in particular” (“Ông Cabot Lodge có đặt sai vấn đề không?” *Tự Do*, Sep. 6, 1964).

<sup>176</sup> Calls for American retreat—both domestically and abroad—were interpreted as part of France’s neutralist schemes. “Thách thức và lẽ loi,” *Tự Do*, July 29, 1964.

<sup>177</sup> “Tuyên Cáo của Chánh Phủ VNCH,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 3, 1965; even then, some journalists like Thanh Huy called upon the administration to consult with the Vietnamese people regarding participation and stance on conferences. Clear statement on whether the Republic was going to participate or not is demanded. See “Đừng Đặt dân vào thế kẹt,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 30, 1965.

<sup>178</sup> Khánh in January after coup: “Saigon Junta Publicly Rejected Policy Proposed by Paris,” *New York Times*, Jan 30, 1964. After Gulf of Tonkin: “PARIS REAFFIRMS VIETNAM POLICY,” *New York Times*, Aug 15, 1964; “PARIS REAFFIRMS VIETNAM POLICY,” *New York Times*, Aug 15, 1964. After Vũng Tàu Charter: “PARIS AGAIN ASKS NEUTRAL VIETNAM,” *New York Times*, Aug 27, 1964; After ouster of Hương and joint US-Vietnamese bombing raids of North Vietnam: “French plea for another conference,” *The Guardian*, Feb 11, 1965

political autonomy.<sup>179</sup> Outside of Vietnam, proposals for international conferences—with representatives from both sides of the Cold War—came about due to ongoing border conflicts, the resumption of civil war in Laos, and communist gains in Southeast Asia.<sup>180</sup> Bickering and diplomatic stalemate prevented any conference from convening in 1964 as Johnson took a hardline stance against France’s neutralist overtures.<sup>181</sup> And, by 1965, numerous countries,<sup>182</sup> the General Secretary of the UN,<sup>183</sup> as well as leftists in the United States<sup>184</sup> and Britain,<sup>185</sup> were pushing for the reconvening of a new “Geneva Conference” for not only cessation of war in Vietnam, but also renegotiate terms of Laos’ neutrality.<sup>186</sup> By the time Quát came into power, relations between the United States and France had greatly deteriorated.<sup>187</sup> However, as 1965 wore on, President Johnson began initiating steps towards negotiated peace.<sup>188</sup> By April, the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, and France had all agreed to join a renewed Conference on Indochina.<sup>189</sup> Even Saigon agreed in part by declaring itself willing to sit with the Communist North to re-discuss the terms of Laos’ neutrality.<sup>190</sup> An actual conference to resolve these issues

<sup>179</sup> For Từ Chung, Quát’s declaration against international initiatives in early March was simply a “general principle.” If there was to be a conference, that conference must be based on negotiations between “Saigon and Hà Nội” while “those international parties which created the Geneva Accords of 1954 would negotiate amongst themselves; an Accord in which the ink had not yet dried and was already violated.” The matter, for the author, was that the Vietnam conflict must be based on the political determination of the Vietnamese people rather than one initiated and proposed by the various international parties who seemed to all have their own agenda (Từ Chung, “Thiên Hạ Đại Ích Kỳ,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 12, 1965).

<sup>180</sup> Border conflict between South Vietnam and Cambodia: “DE GAULLE ASKING U.S.-BRITISH STEPS ON CAMBODIA ISSUE,” *New York Times*, Mar 26, 1964; “CAMBODIA HEDGES OFFER TO SAIGON,” *New York Times*, Mar 28, 1964; “Cambodia Backs Down on Vietnam Peace Talks,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 7, 1964; “Geneva meeting demanded,” *The Guardian*, May 20, 1964. Resumption of Laotian Civil War and Communist gains: “DE GAULLE SEEKS PARLEY TO HALT FIGHTING IN LAOS,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1964; “Third of Neutralist Army Trapped By Laos Reds,” *The Sun*, May 26, 1964;

<sup>181</sup> “US turns against new Geneva conference: Support for a UN role in South-east Asia,” *The Guardian*, May 22, 1964; “WHY PARIS PRESSES SOUTHEAST ASIAN NEUTRALITY,” *New York Times*, Jun 7, 1964; “JOHNSON REJECTS DE GAULLE’S CALL FOR TALKS ON ASIA,” *New York Times*, Jul 25, 1964; “LODGE AND JOXE DISCUSS VIETNAM,” *New York Times*, Aug 18, 1964; “U.S. Still Uninterested,” *New York Times*, Oct 31, 1964;

<sup>182</sup> Non-Aligned Country: “NONALIGNED NATIONS SET FOR PARLEY,” *The Sun (1837-1993)*; Oct 1, 1964; Cambodia: “Sihanouk Urges Neutral South Viet-Nam,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*; Feb 13, 1965; India: “France Says Pakistan, India Back Viet Policy,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 18, 1965; Britain: “Allied Leaders Seek Negotiated Viet-Nam Peace,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Feb 24, 1965; Soviet Union: “FRANCE, RUSSIA O.K. VIET PARLEY,” *The Sun*, Feb 25, 1965; Indonesia: “SUKARNO CONDEMNS ‘IMPERIALIST’ MOVES,” *New York Times*, Mar 5, 1965

<sup>183</sup> “THANT PROPOSES VIETNAM PARLEY TO END FIGHTING,” *New York Times*, Jul 9, 1964; “De Gaulle Meets with Thant on U.N.” *New York Times*, Jul 22, 1964

<sup>184</sup> “DEMOCRATS URGE VIETNAM NEGOTIATIONS,” *The Sun*, Feb 18, 1965.

<sup>185</sup> “Left Presses Wilson For Viet Peace Talks,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Feb 14, 1965

<sup>186</sup> “THE GENEVA ACCORDS,” *New York Times*, Mar 7, 1965; “Three Viet ‘Solutions’ Attributed to France,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Mar 7, 1965;

<sup>187</sup> “Sweetness, Light Mark De Gaulle Press Talk,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Feb 5, 1965; “U.S. AND FRANCE CONCLUDE TALKS: 2 NATIONS DISAGREE ABOUT PROBLEM,” *The Sun*, Feb 21, 1965

<sup>188</sup> “Reds Reject Negotiated Accord,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Mar 9, 1965; “Seeking peace on Johnson offer Work starts to help Asia,” *The Observer (1901- 2003)*; Apr 11, 1965;

<sup>189</sup> “U.S. Would Send Harriman To Cambodia Conference,” *New York Times*, Apr 26, 1965; “British Accept Soviet Plan To Seek Cambodian Parley,” *New York Times*, Apr 27, 1965; “Soviet and France OK Geneva Talks,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr 29, 1965

<sup>190</sup> “Saigon Supports a Parley,” *New York Times*, Apr 24, 1965

would not occur until after the Tết Offensive in 1968. However, by January of 1966, Johnson had largely reversed his opposition to negotiations and had declared the 1954 Geneva Accords as “adequate basis” for peace in Vietnam. The United States was willing to sit down with South Vietnam’s communist enemies to discuss a ceasefire, and the NLF was promised a seat at the conference table “if Hà Nội...decides she wants to cease aggression.”<sup>191</sup>

History is filled with irony. One of such was that, beginning during the Quát administration, this link between anti-neutralism and Vietnamese political autonomy was reversed in which certain organizations—rather advocating for self-determination of an anti-neutralist sort—called for a “peace” that was initiated and created by the Vietnamese people themselves. This reversal of political discourse, as have been demonstrated, would be politically stifled by the end of the Quát government. And, similar to other ideological developments of the Interregnum, opposition to “peace movements” were in large part led by components in civil society rather than the Republican state. Calls for “peace” during the Quát administration, nevertheless, laid the foundations for demands for ceasefire and the cessation of war in 1966 as the Buddhists and students waged struggle against an administration viewed as repressive and militarist. The UBC eventually placed their whole weight in the revived demands for “peace” in 1966 which ultimately resulted in disastrous divisions within the Church and the collapse of Buddhist political supremacy in South Vietnam.

By that point, the key issue was the increasing presence of American troops in Vietnam which dovetailed into the language of “self-determination” once advocated by the SMPPH of Thích Quảng Liên. Indeed, it was during the Quát administration that combat troops were first deployed to South Vietnam—originally to serve as defensive units protecting American installations in addition to the 23,500 Americans who were restricted to support, supply or advisory roles. While much of the present history argues that such a measure took the Quát administration by surprise or went against the wishes of the Quát administration, news of increasing American role and troops in South Vietnam were carried as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> of March in *Chinh Luận*. Originally scheduled to land on the 4<sup>th</sup>, the landing of US marines were postponed until the 8<sup>th</sup> when the first 1,500 out of 3,500 arrived in Đà Nẵng. In *Chinh Luận*, the move by the United States was praised as a determined signal against international communism and was seen as an extension of American direct involvement in the war—a move already signaled by joint Vietnamese-American air raids against the North.<sup>192</sup> Just prior to landing, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu—serving as Deputy Premier of National Defense—declared these American aerial military actions came about due to the “request and agreement between the two governments” of South Vietnam and America.<sup>193</sup> Nguyễn Chánh Thi—commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Corps—greeted the marines led by Brig. Gen. Frederick Karch with full fanfare on the

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<sup>191</sup> “The Geneva Agreements, Ho Chi Minh’s Four Points and President Johnson’s 14 Points,” *The Observer*, Feb. 6, 1966.

<sup>192</sup> “although the 2 battalions of marines only have the role protecting the airstrip and a number of military installations—so that our military would have a free hand to fight—but this development means that if international communism continues to infiltrate South Vietnam, the United states will not demur any longer, determined to participate in the fight,” (Đặng Văn Sung, “Nghĩ gì về 2 đoàn Thủy Quân Lục Chiến Hoa Kỳ đến Đà Nẵng?” *Chinh Luận*, Mar. 9, 1965).

<sup>193</sup> “Các Vấn đề nêu lên đều được giải quyết êm ru,” *Chinh Luận*, Mar. 3, 1965.

beaches of Đà Nẵng,<sup>194</sup> and Phan Huy Quát issued a statement on the 8<sup>th</sup> thanking the United States for “sending their children to help Vietnam.”<sup>195</sup>

However, by the end of May, some 46,000 American troops were stationed in Vietnam—almost doubling what it was just 3 months prior.<sup>196</sup> In Đà Nẵng, of the 12,000 troops stationed there, 7,000 were American marines.<sup>197</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup>, American paratroopers conducted its first mission in communist held territories.<sup>198</sup> As American military presence in South Vietnam grew, so did a number of issues, including the rise of food stock prices, prostitution, black markets and corruption. However, perhaps most importantly was the issue of political autonomy and the Vietnamese ability to determine the course of the anticommunist war. Indeed, militarily, this was expressed as early as late April by Nguyễn Cao Kỳ who reignited calls for the “Northward March” and rejected a joint Vietnamese-American military command structure. By November of 1965, there were more US military officers at the rank of General than there were Vietnamese.<sup>199</sup>

While the magnitude of these issues would not become fully apparent until the Buddhist protests in the summer of 1966, it was under the administration of Phan Huy Quát that the foundations of the political crisis ultimately leading to the formation of the Second Republic was established. Moreover, while “peace” was associated to “neutralism” in the dominant anticommunist political vocabulary, the demands for “peace” as well as “democracy” and return to “civil rule” in 1966 found social, economic, and political rooting in the increasing role of America in the Vietnamese conflict. This issue surrounding the definition of “self-determination” and “peace” polarized the different political forces in the Republican civil society. On the one hand, those who pushed for “true peace” and American presence cannot but eventually cope with what that would mean as the South Vietnamese society further deteriorated. On the other hand, those who saw peace as rooted in the departure of *all* foreign troops face the continuing contradictions in American foreign policy which, for one, called for “unconditional discussion,” while, for another, was increasing its military activities in South Vietnam. The formation of the Second Republic signified a victory for demands of “True Democracy and Freedom,” but that victory was supplanted by the rise of conservative forces led primarily by historically prominent nationalist groups and the militant Catholic movement of Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh. The manner in which these struggles evolved—those who won, those who lost—would shape the fabric of political discourse during the Second Republic and beyond. Perhaps most indicative of this was the return of narratives in praise of Ngô Đình Diệm in 1969—a phenomenon that had seemed impossible amidst mobilization against “vestiges of the Cần Lao Party” in 1964. It is here that we turn to the beginning of how that discursive shift became consolidated.

### *The Return to Military Rule*

The collapse of the Quát administration came about, on the one hand, due to mobilized opposition on the part of the revived civil-societal demands for a stronger anticommunist, anti-neutralist government. On the other hand, these oppositional components utilized a crisis in cabinet reformation enacted by the Quát government in late May to call for the complete ouster

<sup>194</sup> “Đệ Thất hạm đội chờ lệnh,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 11, 1965.

<sup>195</sup> “Chính Phủ VNCH cảm tạ hoa kỳ đã gửi con em qua giúp đỡ Việt Nam,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 11, 1965.

<sup>196</sup> 1966 Đoàn Thềm, 86

<sup>197</sup> “Bộ Mặt Ngày nay của Thành Phố Chiến Lược Đà Nẵng,” *Chính Luận*, May 20, 1965.

<sup>198</sup> “Hành Quân Tập Trận Đại Quy Mô Gần Biên Hòa,” *Chính Luận*, May 21, 1965

<sup>199</sup> “U.S. General Officers Predominate in Viet,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov 8, 1965



of Quát. What effectively resulted was a political crisis that initiated a virtual administrative standstill magnified by street protests and demonstrations. By early June, Phan Huy Quát called upon the military to intervene. The generals, rather than resolving the crisis of state, simply chose to disband the entire enterprise of civil rule. By the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, national leadership had returned to military hands and dawned a new period of military governance in South Vietnam.

Initiating this stalemate was a simple technicality in the Provisional Charter of 10-20 which gave the Head of State the power to approve new cabinet members or not. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, Phan Huy Quát suggested a reshuffling of his cabinet which would replace the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of the Economy. The two men, however, refused to resign and Phan Khắc Sửu refused to use his powers to oust these men citing that it was unconstitutional as these two ministers had not yet resigned. Quát turned to the National Legislative Council but divisions within the body prevented any substantive action to be taken on the matter.

Catholics had built a coalition with Southerners who saw themselves unrepresented in the Quát administration. The odd mix of nationalist parties, religious sects, southern Buddhists, and militant Catholics presented multiple petitions to the Head of State in protest of Quát.<sup>200</sup> The Catholic-led coalition demanded the removal of Quát as Prime Minister—which, according to the Provisional Charter, was allowed.<sup>201</sup> Almost comical at points,<sup>202</sup> the oppositional mobilization against the Quát administration quickly became explosive. 2000 marched in Đồng Nai on June 3<sup>rd</sup>,<sup>203</sup> a police car was burned in a Saigon suburb on the night of the 5<sup>th</sup>,<sup>204</sup> a massive Catholic-led protest erupted in the capitol on the 6<sup>th</sup>,<sup>205</sup> and demonstrations broke out on the 8<sup>th</sup> in Biên Hòa and Catholic hamlets.<sup>206</sup>

The ability of Catholics to wage such demonstrations and the broad coalition they were able to form came about due to their mobilization against “peace movements.” Catholics, early on, had focused on the issue of “religious discrimination.” While the Hòa Hảo and the Cao Đài had early on joined the Catholic’s condemnation of the “peace movement,”<sup>207</sup> the Catholics also made allies amongst the Vietnamese of the Baha’i religion—a sect deriving its inspiration from Shia Islam and the Persian philosopher Baha’u’llah. The crux of the issue came when the Baha’i religion appealed to the NLC for recognition as an official religion in South Vietnam. The legislative body, however, chose not to do so. Indicative of the support that Catholics were

<sup>200</sup> “New Buddhist Crisis Looms for Vietnam,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1965; “Sau Vụ Bùi Phát và ‘chiếm’ dinh Gia Long trọn 6 tiếng,” *Chính Luận*, June 10, 1965.

<sup>201</sup> SAIGON CATHOLICS SEEK QUAT OUSTER, *New York Times*, Jun 2, 1965; “Mặt Trận Công Giáo Dân tiếp xúc với Quốc trưởng,” *Chính Luận*, June 2, 1965; “Quốc Trưởng, Hội Đồng Quốc Gia Lập Phát, Thủ Tướng, Các Tướng Lãnh và Tổng Bộ, tương họp suốt cả buổi chiều,” *Chính Luận*, June 5, 1965. Complaints and demands of the Catholics were censored early on during the protest. See “Một ngày hai lực lượng cùng lên tiếng,” *Chính Luận*, May 29, 1965.

<sup>202</sup> 200 Catholic elders held a “sleep-in” at Sửu’s residence which was cut short before midnight due to exhaustion and requests by priests for the elders to go home, (“Viet Catholics Stage ‘Sleep-in’ at Palace,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 8, 1965; “Một cảnh tượng tự do dân chủ thật là ít khi xảy ra,” *Chính Luận*, June 9, 1965)

<sup>203</sup> “Viet Leaders Meet on Pleas to Oust Quat,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 4, 1965

<sup>204</sup> Another Political Split Disrupts Viet Regime. *Los Angeles Times* (1923-1995); Jun 6, 1965; “Sau Vụ đốt xe, đồng bào Công Giáo Bùi Phát lại họp mít tinh,” *Chính Luận*, June 8, 1965.

<sup>205</sup> “SAIGON CATHOLICS ASSAILING REGIME,” *New York Times*, Jun 6, 1965

<sup>206</sup> “Biểu tình và kiểm soát lưu thông,” *Chính Luận*, June 10, 1965.

<sup>207</sup> This was most notable through the formation of the Anticommunist Nationalist League which was led by Hoàng Cơ Bình—A Hòa Hảo-ist and leader of the Social Democrats—who unified anticommunist elements in the Republican civil society, including nationalist parties and the Cao Đài religion.

giving to the sect, the Baha'i's response to the National Legislative Council was carried in *Xây Dựng*. The communique alleged “disregard” of the Baha'i's profile, religious discrimination, and uneven application of religious recognition that prioritized the Buddhist Church.<sup>208</sup> On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, Catholics, Cao Đài, and Hòa Hảo joined with the Baha'i calling for legal reforms and official recognition as had been done for the UBC.<sup>209</sup> The irony was that the Quát administration did not have a specific policy on religions and was relying on legal precedents dating back to the Khánh era,<sup>210</sup> which begs legitimacy of the NLC ruling.<sup>211</sup> During its mobilization against Quát in late May, alongside allegations of neutralist sympathies and ineffective prosecution of the anticommunist war, the Catholics pushed the administration on the religious issue declaring that the administration was “dictatorial” in its religious ruling—the epitomal case being the Baha'i.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, Catholics, Hòa Hảo, Cao Đài, and Baha'i declared their lack of confidence in the Quát administration and called for the removal of the Premier.<sup>213</sup>

Outside of the issue of religious discrimination, other developments from April onward made Catholic relationship to the Quát administration was increasingly strained. Although the limelight on Thích Quảng Liên in the general press had largely faded by mid-April, Catholics continued to pressure the Quát administration on its inability to provide justification for legally recognizing the SMPPH while cracking down on other peace organizations. Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh, at one point, had alleged secret support from the UBC for the SMPPH and the possibility of large peace demonstrations in the Capitol.<sup>214</sup> To make matters worse, in early April, the AFC sought to purge two Catholic military officers—Adm. Chung Tấn Cang and Maj. Gen. Phạm Văn Đồng—who were allegedly tied to illegal sale of goods, corruption as well as casino and gambling operations. Phạm Văn Đồng, however, was the Governor-General of Saigon during the Trần Văn Hương administration and had deployed military force in disbanding antigovernment protests.<sup>215</sup> Reports on the dismissals of these military officers were censored from the South Vietnamese press and information was not allowed to be published until mid-April.<sup>216</sup>

An editorial published in *Xây Dựng*—much of the content of which was censored out—alleged religious discrimination associated to the event. Seen as injustice, the piece argued that the removal of these military officers resulted because the Quát administration caved to special interests—implying the Buddhists. According to the article, “to avoid being labeled with ‘religious discrimination,’ the administration must demonstrate fairness and wisdom, resolving issues according to standards of justice and with courage to combat all forms of illegal

<sup>208</sup> “Năm Điểm của HĐ TT Đạo Baha’I trả lời HĐQGLP,” *Xây Dựng*, Apr. 15, 1965.

<sup>209</sup> UB Liên Lạc Tôn Giáo Phản Đối Dự Thảo Luật Án Định Quy Chế Giáo Hội,” *Chính Luận*, May 17, 1965.

<sup>210</sup> “Chính Phủ minh xác lập trường đối với các tôn giáo,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 8, 1965.

<sup>211</sup> “Lại thêm thái độ bất công của Chính Phủ đối với một số tôn giáo, qua bản dự luật quy chế tôn giáo gửi cho các đại diện tôn giáo, mặc dầu quy chế ấy là do Chính Phủ Nguyễn Khánh để lại,” (“Trong Buổi yết kiến Quốc Trưởng và Hội Đồng Quốc Gia Lập Pháp, ngày 27-5-65,” *Xây Dựng*, May 29, 1965).

<sup>212</sup> “Kiến nghị của khối Công Giáo ĐĐK,” *Xây Dựng*, May 29, 1965.

<sup>213</sup> “Các Tôn Giáo Thông Báo cho tín hữu Chí Phủ Không Đáp Ứng nguyện vọng của các tôn giáo,” *Xây Dựng*, June 5, 1965.

<sup>214</sup> “Catholics Irked by Buddhist Peace Moves,” *Boston Globe*, Mar 28, 1965.

<sup>215</sup> “Johnson's Speech on Vietnam Is Worrying Saigon Officials,” *New York Times*, Apr 9, 1965; “S. VIET NAM ACTION: 2 MILITARY LEADERS SUSPENDED,” *The Times of India*, Apr 12, 1965; “Saigon Catholics Fearful Of Buddhist Army Purge,” *New York Times*, Apr 13, 1965;

<sup>216</sup> “Đây! Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ đã xác nhận: Đề Đốc Cang và Tướng Đồng Tạm Thời bị Ngưng Chức để chờ điều tra,” *Tự Do*, Apr. 15, 1965.

pressures.” Catholic leaders appealed to the Quát administration to cease the “purge of Catholic military commanders” while lambasting Quát as “too soft of a man” who had “definitely bow[ed] under the pressure of the Armed Forces Council, which in turn follows the line of the Buddhist neutralists.”<sup>217</sup> The arrests of these two Catholic officers resulted in condemnation from Catholics of the “reassignment, suspension and arrest of nationalist, anticommunist elements.”<sup>218</sup>

In late May, another set of events further turned the Catholics from the Quát administration. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, a coup plot led largely by ousted Catholic military officers was crushed before it could even begin. The leader of the coup plot in May—Col. Phạm Ngọc Thảo<sup>219</sup>—was popular amongst the Catholics and had also participated in the coup attempt in February with Lâm Văn Phát—a former Đại Việt and Catholic general. Both were sentenced to death<sup>220</sup> though Thảo escaped and was hunted down until he was shot down in July of 1965. Some 40 individuals were arrested in the attempted coup, and 1 colonel was killed attempting to escape. The majority of those arrested were Catholics, roughly 1/3 were civilians including 2 priests.<sup>221</sup> In the aftermath, the Quát argued that communist guerrillas had supported the coup, citing some 2 battalions of enemy forces had agreed to join the coup orchestrators to kidnap Quát, as well as the three ranking generals Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, and Nguyễn Chánh Thi. The Chief of Military Police—Trần Văn Chính—was removed from his position in alleged connection to the coup and replaced with Kỳ’s protégé, Deputy Commander of the Air Force Col. Nguyễn Ngọc Loan.

By the time the Catholics mounted their final offensive for the removal of Phan Huy Quát, they were clearly not without allies—nor were they deprived of a repertoire of grievances to use against the administration. Catholics were not only joined by newly revived activism of nationalist parties, but politics in the South had largely gravitated towards their adamant anticommunist and “anti-peace movement” demands. Catholics, by early May, on the one hand, critiqued the Quát administration on its dealings with the “peace movements” and persecution of nationalists, but, on the other hand, also demanded a greater effort to integrate the wider population into the anticommunist war effort.<sup>222</sup> This demand was not exclusive to the Catholics.

A mid-May piece ran in *Chính Luận* argued adamantly that “the administration had not demonstrated its capability in leading the current war.” To deal with the grievous military, social, and political issues plaguing South Vietnam, the piece stated, the South Vietnamese people needed a “truly revolutionary government that can overcome all obstacles, reactionary forces.” Quite radically, the piece argues that the government must be “strong, even if it is dictatorial, as long as it is a revolutionary dictatorship.” Coming after the dismissal of Cang and Đồng, the piece decries personal rivalries and selfish conflicts that are left unaddressed by the administration. Moreover, the Quát administration had no response for the increasing American

<sup>217</sup> “Saigon Catholics Fearful Of Buddhist Army Purge,” *New York Times*, Apr 13, 1965

<sup>218</sup> “Saigon Catholics Contend Regime Is Easy on Reds,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1965

<sup>219</sup> The former overseer of the Strategic Hamlet Program under Ngô Đình Diệm and was ironically an NLF spy.

<sup>220</sup> “Buddhist Peace Moves, Government Criticized,” *Boston Globe*, May 10, 1965

<sup>221</sup> “Viet Coup Broken Up; 40 Jailed,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, May 22, 1965; “Coup Plot Broken Up in Saigon” *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1965

<sup>222</sup> “Đại Hội LL Đại Đoàn Kết Lập Quyết Nghị Hoan Nghên Giải Pháp Tán Công Bắc Việt,” *Chính Luận*, May 11, 1965.

involvement in the Vietnam conflict and contradictions in American policy of enhancing their war effort while proposing “negotiations” with the enemy.<sup>223</sup>

In a different editorial, an author calls for not only a “strong government” to deal with contemporary issues, but also the creation of a strong “political force” within the society. In essence, the political mobilization of the populace to achieve matters that a government weighed down by bureaucratic procedures could not. The piece, however, leaves out how this “political force” can be achieved.<sup>224</sup> As if to resolve this matter, a different author argues that the government must take responsibility for the “political education” of the citizenry. Only such a measure would encourage popular participation and contribution to the anticommunist war—binding the political aims and legitimacy of the government to the will of the people.<sup>225</sup> Another author returned to the matter of “political aptitude” and placed the responsibility of raising that “political aptitude” on the administration. To combat enemy propaganda, the piece argues, the “political aptitude” of the society must be enhanced as it was “a long-term measure for victory over communism.”<sup>226</sup>

These editorials highlighted the key critiques against the Quát administration—the evident weakness and the inability of the government to unify and mobilize the population for the anticommunist war. Evidently widespread, these critiques were summarized by *Tự Do*. In a heavily censored editorial, the newspaper laid out the three main grievances against Quát: “the refusal to prioritize Righteousness....inability to unify the various nationalist forces....irresolute in progressing towards a legitimate democracy.”<sup>227</sup> As Quát moved to reform his cabinet, *Tự Do* argued that “the Quát government needs to create more enthusiastic anticommunism by reforming or reinforcing his cabinet with individuals who are truly revolutionary and anticommunist.” The newspaper defined “Revolution [as] anticommunist, antineutralist revolution.” That revolution had to be clarified and openly supported by the administration.<sup>228</sup> Succinctly, the newspaper argued that “the national leadership, more than any one, need to be the role model for everyone: dare to raise Righteousness, dare to act in accordance to Righteousness, dare to risk their life to live by Righteousness.”<sup>229</sup>

*Chính Luận*’s Từ Chung expressed similarly. Early on, the journalist had critiqued the Quát administration for its handling of the “peace” issue in Vietnam.<sup>230</sup> In late April, he wrote another editorial which critiques the administration for its lackadaisical psychological warfare efforts in combating the “slogans of peace [which] create chaos in the discourse.” As the piece argues, while “peace through victory” was a given, the administration and the people must be able to come to consensus on what can be sacrificed to achieve that peace and what must not be sacrificed—that is the specific terms of peace. To arrive at that consensus, the administration

<sup>223</sup>The Americans, the piece argues, needs to retain an “advisory” role in South Vietnam and “allow the people of VN to self-rule, self-determine, self-calculate, and self-enact their own policies.” The administration, the piece argues, have to request Americans to not only aid the South Vietnamese in the war, but also aid them in creating that “revolution to save our country.... through monetary and technological assistance...[and] rural development” (Ngô Chính Tâm and Dương Thành Ý, “Chiến Tranh và Cách Mạng,” *Chính Luận*, May 18-19, 1965).

<sup>224</sup> Trường Giang, “Chính Phủ Mạnh...” *Chính Luận*, May 26, 1965.

<sup>225</sup> Đặng Tâm, “Thông tin, Tuyên Truyền, và Giáo Dục,” *Chính Luận*, May 26, 1965

<sup>226</sup> Nguyễn Văn Chiêu, “Đã đến lúc đặt vấn đề dân trí,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 1, 1965

<sup>227</sup> Article held *Tự Do*’s regular opinion column written by the editorial board, “Lập Trường” dated May 24, 1965.

<sup>228</sup> “Chính Phủ Phan Huy Quát có nên cải tổ không?” *Tự Do*, May 8, 1965.

<sup>229</sup> *Tự Do*, May 17, 1965

<sup>230</sup> Từ Chung, “Vấn Đề Vấn Hội Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 9, 1965

must present a clear, “resolute” statement of these terms and provide a mechanism through which popular opinions and critiques can be relayed.<sup>231</sup> Apart from that, the administration must develop a unified “resoluteness of thought”—an issue that was necessary but difficult to achieve. The constant infighting between “nationalists” prevents such “resoluteness” from manifesting. The task of unifying that “resoluteness” was placed on the administration to come up with a “political resolution” that would assuage the internal strife between anticommunist, nationalist bodies.<sup>232</sup>

The widespread disillusionment with the Quát administration was to be exploited by the Catholics in late May. As if waiting for such an opportunity, the Catholics mounted their political offensive against the Quát administration during what was effectively an administrative stalemate between Head of State Phan Khắc Sửu and Phan Huy Quát. Outside of a brief visit by the Buddhists which requested that things be “resolved peacefully,”<sup>233</sup> Premier Quát had virtually no support from any civil-societal components of the Republic. Phan Khắc Sửu, a Cao Đài-ist, evidently sided with the protesting religious sects and Catholics. Apart from the array of grievances conveyed in the protests, Lâm Vĩnh Thế also noted regional divides and pointed to how important cabinet positions in the Quát administration were held by northerners and those from Central Vietnam.<sup>234</sup> Indeed, as one contemporary report noted, outside of the Catholics, opposition primarily came from the Mekong River Delta—the source of the Hỏa Hào and Cao Đài religions.<sup>235</sup> This analysis further explains the presence of Mekong River Buddhists, led by Thích Chơn Bôn,<sup>236</sup> in the Catholic-led protests.

Catholics, in some ways, presented a legally-sanctioned solution to the crisis: the removal of Phan Huy Quát as Premier. It is unclear why Phan Khắc Sửu who was oppositional to Quát did not simply dismiss the Premier—an avenue that very well may have had sustained civil rule, even if with a different Premier. For the NLC, although members interpreted that the Provisional Charter allowed the Premier to assign or dismiss his cabinet members at will, they chose instead to vie for a compromise between the Head of State and the Premier—essentially providing a non-solution.<sup>237</sup> When the military were finally called upon to intervene, it was not immediately clear that the civil administration would be dissolved. The AFC—at least officially—had disbanded in May and military officers who were part of Quát’s cabinet resigned. Upon departure, however, the military did give the Quát administration the vote of confidence. Without military leaders directly represented in the cabinet, Catholics were free to “take it the streets” against the administration without directly attacking the military. Furthermore, without any

<sup>231</sup> Từ Chung, “Hòa Bình Vũ Trang,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 22, 1965.

<sup>232</sup> Từ Chung, “Độc Thông Cáo,” *Chính Luận*, May 26, 1965.

<sup>233</sup> “Quốc Trưởng Đã Gặp Thủ Tướng... Sắp hết khủng hoảng rồi,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 3, 1965.

<sup>234</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 94-95

<sup>235</sup> “Another Political Split Disrupts Viet Regime,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 6, 1965

<sup>236</sup> “Kiến nghị của các công dân 4 tôn giáo đệ trình quốc trưởng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa và Hội Đồng Quốc Gia Lập Pháp,” *Xây Dựng*, Jun 4, 1965; Thích Chơn Bôn represented the General Buddhist Church (GBC) *Tổng Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam* which was formed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1964 and was separate from the Unified Buddhist Church (Thằng Hề, “Cuốn Sổ Tay,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 7, 1965; 1964 Đoàn Thêm, 420). Early on, the GBC interacted amicably with the Archdiocese in Saigon and was led by Thích Minh Trực (“Lễ Ra Mắt của Tổng Giáo Hội Phật Giáo VN,” *Xây Dựng*, Dec. 12, 1964; “Hòa Thượng Pháp Chủ Tổng Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam nói với chúng tôi,” *Xây Dựng*, Jan 5-6, 1965). Buddhist political activism, it would seem, was largely monopolized by the Secular Institute which belonged to the UBC. Apart from the opposition to Quát, the GBC rarely appears in matters related to politics.

<sup>237</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 96.

military personnel serving in Quát's cabinet, the generals were able to move against the civil government without jeopardizing any administrative positions held by their own.

Having called upon the military to resolve the crisis, the Republican society awaited the actions of the generals. Some were at least suspicious of a possible end to civil rule. *Tự Do*, for example—which once criticized that “no one dares to suspect that Catholics were communist sympathizers but instead Catholics suspects others for not being anticommunist as them”—pointed out during this interim that the generals must “retain the resolution of civil governance” while also simplifying the Charter, reinspection of the articles in the Charter, and must be “revolutionary”—which by *Tự Do*'s definition meant an administration capable of prosecuting the anticommunist war.<sup>238</sup> Catholics and Buddhists—both of which were adamant on civil governance—were not oppositional on Quát's request for the intervention of the military. Spokespersons for both religions articulated that “the military holds an important role in the present anticommunist war,” however warned protests if necessary.<sup>239</sup> Once it became clear that the military was returning to power, *Tự Do* began demanding that the “revolution”—now redefined as “developing the Republic of Vietnam's...democracy and society”—continue and, on the 18<sup>th</sup>, plead that the “old values” and achievements from former regimes—Minh, Khánh, Hương and Quát—not be erased—implicitly articulating a demand for civil governance. A joint statement was released signed by the Catholics and their religious allies on the 13<sup>th</sup> requesting a civil administration rather than a military one, and would support any administration that could bring Democracy and Freedom, and was “anticommunist, antineutralist, anticolonialist, anti-authoritarian, anti-monoreligious, anti-single party rule”—essentially all the “antis” that had been accumulated by civil-societal mobilization since the collapse of the First Republic.<sup>240</sup> One Western observer, however, perhaps correctly noted that the declaration was making a request rather than a demand.<sup>241</sup>

Major mobilization against a regime that effectively countered the virtual aspirations of Buddhists, Catholics, religious sects, and nationalist parties since November of 1963, however, did not erupt. This, perhaps, was due to the composition of the new leadership which was staffed by the “Young Turks” who were not only popular but represented the “newness” that was once promised in the November Revolution. Furthermore, although the country was technically led by a “Directorate” *Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia* composed entirely of military men, Kỳ's administration composed almost entirely of civilians holding important cabinet positions: Foreign Relations, Justice, and Finance. Outside of Kỳ, only two other military men were in the cabinet: Lt. Gen. Nguyễn Hữu Cồ who was the General Commissioner for War and Defense and Lt. Col. Nguyễn Tân Hồng who oddly held the position of Commissioner for Youth. Civilians also held the highly important Ministry of Psychological Warfare and the Ministry of Rural Development. A number of these cabinet members, including the Commissioner for Psychological Warfare, served under the Quát administration.

From late June of 1965 to March of 1966, 8 full months of relative calm existed in South Vietnam. It was a period of political stability as well as a return to military rule. Moreover, the Kỳ administration which was inaugurated on the 19<sup>th</sup> implemented strict political and socio-

<sup>238</sup> “Những Nguyên Tắc Phải Có,” *Tự Do*, Jun. 12, 1965; “Cách Mạng,” *Tự Do*, Jun. 15, 1965.

<sup>239</sup> “Phản ứng sau cuộc họp báo 9-6,” *Tự Do*, Jun. 11, 1965

<sup>240</sup> “Thành lập một lực lượng duy nhất: Mặt Trận Công Dân các tôn giáo,” *Tự Do*, Jun. 15, 1965.

<sup>241</sup> “GEN. VANTHIEU CHAIRMAN OF NEW VIET RULE,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jun 14, 1965

economic policies that drove directly at the problems articulated by a widespread social stratum in South Vietnam: corruption, inflation, communism and neutralism, psychological warfare, and political education. All these were core aspects of Kỳ's 26-point program, which not only would implement a universal draft, but also the reestablishment a "new training program [that] would also provide for ideological training"<sup>242</sup>—evidence of which was the reintroduction of the Political Study Program for civil servants and soldiers. An execution ground was set up in Saigon next to Bến Thành market as a symbol of the administration's commitment to literally exterminate political and social ills. The Republican civil society saw stricter censorship laws, the enactment of curfew, and price controls—all matters meant to place South Vietnam on a war-footing.<sup>243</sup>

Although the public transfer of power occurred relatively amicably, later recollections pointed at how the Premier and Head of State were forced to handover the administration at literally the point of gun—a request for intervention turned coup. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese Republic was transitioning over to a new era. The Directorate-Era would be one marked by the increasing intensity of the anticommunist war and growing military presence of the United States in South Vietnam. Americans would not simply play the role of the advisor. There would be joint South Vietnamese-US military missions as well as increasing American involvement in South Vietnamese counter-insurgency efforts—particularly after the Honolulu Conference in 1966. The Chiêu Hồi Program would be revived, and so would the Strategic Hamlet. Yet the Political Study Program would remain entirely under South Vietnamese authority. As it was during the First Republic, the PSP would be utilized to justify state programs and decisions particularly amidst political turmoil which erupted during the Spring and Summer of 1966. The next chapter will conclude the Interregnum. It will trace how the administration of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ reutilized ideas first originated during the Diệm administration—the Geneva Accords, Anti-neutralism, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment—while negotiating with the new ideas developed during those first 20 tumultuous months of the Interregnum—Democracy and Civil Rule—as part of the larger project to revive the anticommunist war effort. However, it was not as if ideological leadership simply transferred to the new administration. Civil societal forces remained strong. Catholics maintained their Greater Unity Force, Buddhists still had their Secular Institute, and nationalist parties were only beginning to become active. As South Vietnam entered the year 1966, the PSP would be utilized as a weapon of propaganda to combat mobilization against the military-led regime.

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<sup>242</sup> "Ky New Saigon Premier; Pledges Full Mobilization," *New York Times*, Jun 19, 1965

<sup>243</sup> *Tự Do* early on noted that despite being in a war, Saigon did not look like a war city. He predicted that the administration "led by our military brothers" would change this ("Hãy Sống khác khổ để làm dịu đau thương của các chiến sĩ," *Tự Do*, Jun. 16, 1965).

CHAPTER 9: THE SECOND ERA OF MILIARY RULE



## SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1966

Existing historiography on the Directorate-era often point to success of the military in the 1967 Presidential elections as indicative of the decisive role the United States had in determining South Vietnamese affairs. George Kahin, for example, argued that following the elections, “Vietnamese who lived in the Saigon-controlled areas remained convinced that the dominance of these two generals could not be contested so long as the United States stood solidly behind them.”<sup>1</sup> Similarly, K.W. Taylor recently argued that the success of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu despite his “lack of ability as a political leader” was offset—among other things—“his ability to work with Americans.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, the political developments that occurred during the last two years of the Interregnum had less to do with American agenda in South Vietnam than it did with the transformative—and at times chaotic—politics between state and society that had manifested since the collapse of the First Republic. While Thiệu and Kỳ may very well have been ousted from power if American officials had stood on the side of the Buddhists during the political upheavals of 1966, their consolidation of power in their 1967 electoral victory perhaps had less to do with American support than the developments in the Republican civil society prior, during, and after the political upheavals in 1966.

Indeed, this depiction of American decisiveness in South Vietnamese affairs had allowed scholars on the left to cast the entire period of the Interregnum as one led by corrupt and incompetent South Vietnamese military men who were largely puppets of American imperialism.<sup>3</sup> As for those on the right, the period is utilized in contrast to the “stability” of the First Republic and the return to “stability” after the introduction of American troops and the return of the military to power. However, as Part II of this dissertation has shown, politics in South Vietnam went far beyond simply the generals who ostensibly dominated the “supreme” organs of state. Rather, civil societal forces that spurred into life following the collapse of the Diệm administration greatly determined the rise and fall of regimes throughout the period. The political battles, debates, and “interpretive contests” that marked the era largely involved concerns viewed as important for the South Vietnamese rather than for the Americans.

The inability to appreciate—or even acknowledge—the political dynamics within the Republican civil society during the interregnum years prevent a comprehensive understanding of South Vietnam. Democracy, after all, was not a predetermined outcome following the death of Diệm; it was an achievement of 4 years of civic mobilization, negotiations, and social upsurge. Furthermore, this neglect of South Vietnamese voices in an American-centric historiography is deleterious for comprehending South Vietnamese anticommunism, nationhood, and agency. The Interregnum was a period of contest over not only what South Vietnam stood for; it was also a contestation over the South Vietnamese future. This contest over meaning manifested in real political form through the political treatises, communiques, journalistic commentaries, mobilization and protests that emerged from the Republican civil society. When it comes to finally forming the democratic structures of the Second Republic, it is this contest—rather than the agenda of the United States in Vietnam—that most comprehensively describe and ultimately shaped the contours of politics in the Southern Republic.

<sup>1</sup> *Intervention*, 432. See also Topmiller, 93-142

<sup>2</sup> *A History of the Vietnamese*, 601.

<sup>3</sup> Marilyn Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1993*; William J. Duiker, *Sacred War*.

Treated as a political aberration in South Vietnamese history, the Interregnum was in fact essential to the development, modification, and continuation of Vietnamese anticommunist ideas and values. Indeed, the previous chapters in Part II had demonstrated how it is that the narratives of anti-neutralism, the rejection of the Geneva Accords, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment were perpetuated. As argued, this perpetuation came alongside how civil society deployed the novel narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom.” Thus, this continuity was made possible by the Republican civil society—a civil society that perceived itself and mobilized in opposition to the Republican state. The “interpretative contest” of the period drew on terminologies, imagery, and narratives that blended both the state-ideology of the First Republic with demands for “True Democracy and Freedom.” Through complex deployment of ideas, narratives and values from the First Republic retained its salience in South Vietnamese politics. This period of “chaos” made possible this ideological continuity, linking the First Republic to the Second. Indeed, as much of the period was marked by a lack of state ideological leadership, civil societal mobilization carried along with it not only demands for civil rule and democratic institutions; through this mobilization, anticommunist values from the First Republic carried on as well. This continuity, furthermore, cannot be seen as either automatic or accidental; rather it is made possible only through real human activity. The fact that new ideological leaders—located in the Republican civil society rather the Republican state—chose to champion and deploy anticommunist narratives allowed these ideas to continue onto the Second Republic. However, rather than a static phenomenon, these ideas transformed over the course of the interregnum years, molded by that “interpretative contest” over the meaning, purpose, and future of the Southern Republic—and consequently, Vietnamese anticommunism.

In the same way, the 1966 Struggle Movement and the 1967 presidential election must be seen as extensions of this contest over the meaning and future of the Republic. Rather than isolated phenomena, these events are part of a culminating chapter of the civil societal push for “True Democracy and Freedom.” Like the protests in August of 1964, the “Struggle Movement” which erupted in March of 1966 pushed for civil rule and democracy, demanding the military administration to hold general elections and institute a Constituent Assembly paving way for democratic reforms in South Vietnam. As the movement progressed, demonstrators attacked not only the militaristic nature of the Thiệu-Kỳ regime, but also American seeming support of military authoritarianism. Grievances against military rule blended with growing opposition to American presence, fear for South Vietnamese political autonomy, and concerns over the catastrophes of war. Although the upheavals began as an opposition to the Kỳ administration, demonstrations quickly transformed into a broader movement that pushed for a cessation of the war, negotiations with the communist enemy, and for peace in Vietnam. Although the rebellion was ultimately crushed by the South Vietnamese military, Buddhists nevertheless left their mark on the South Vietnamese political arena, initiating a process that would result in the formation of the Second Republic. By the time the Presidential elections were underway in 1967, it was not simply the Buddhists who were pushing for an end to the war or blatantly attacking the military administration, key civilian presidential tickets made “peace” and the failures of the military administration the focal of their campaigns.

Although the period of Directorate rule began with 8-months of relative peace, these 8-months were not without discontents. The military administration, from the start, was not particularly popular. The two most dominant political groups of the Interregnum—the Catholics and the Buddhists—had openly voiced their opposition to the militaristic nature of the new

regime.<sup>4</sup> The increase of American military presence in South Vietnam had also sparked renewed criticisms and fears that South Vietnam was progressively losing control over the conduct of the anticommunist war.<sup>5</sup> And, in late August, new draft laws sparked student protests against American presence, the militaristic policies of the new administration, and called for a new government appointed by a national assembly. Although largely peaceful and relatively minor, these protests encompassed both Catholic and Buddhist support and magnified the issue of South Vietnam's national sovereignty amidst American military build-up.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, voices in civil society rejected the definition of "social revolution" proffered by the new administration and deemed the return of military rule as a betrayal of the promise of the November Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

Major upheaval against the Thiệu-Kỳ administration, however, did not erupt until March of 1966. Following the ouster of Brigadier General Nguyễn Chánh Thi from his position as the commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Corps, political protests erupted in the Central Region marking a renewed "Struggle Movement" against the militaristic and undemocratic nature of the Directorate administration. Supported by the leaders of the Secular Institute, protests quickly spread to the key urban centers of Huế, Đà Nẵng and Đà Lạt with participation from local administrators and military personnel in the region. By the end of March, Central Vietnam had ceased to be under Saigon's control. While certain early measures were taken by Kỳ to attempt to re seize authority over Central Vietnam, the Directorate acquiesced to Buddhist demands by holding a "National Political Congress" on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April and issued Decree 14/66 which mandated national elections to form a Constitutional Congress within 3-5 months. Despite appeals from the Buddhist leadership for cessation of protests, militant activities continued to rage in Central Vietnam throughout the month of April. Violence quickly erupted between the Struggle Movement and conservative groupings like the Catholics and nationalist parties. The conservative bloc saw the Buddhist-led upheaval as potentially catastrophic for the anticommunist war. Reminiscent of the response to the PNSC in September and October of 1964, the VNQDD, Catholics and other staunch anticommunist groupings denounced the "Struggle Movement" as communist inspired and opposed the immediate enactment of a national assembly. Throughout April, a spree of reciprocal violence marked by retaliatory arson, assassinations, kidnapping, vandalism, and threats erupted between the armed wing of the

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<sup>4</sup> Thích Trí Quang, leader of the militant Buddhist faction, had called Thiệu a "military fascist," compared Thiệu to Diệm, and argues that Kỳ simply carried out Thiệu's orders ("Thieu Called A Military Fascist," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 12, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> "Ky Battles View People Are Losing Control at Saigon," *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 8, 1965; "Ky Hints at New Firmness When Dealing With Lodge," *New York Times*, Aug 8, 1965; "Ky's Barbs at Lodge Held Omen of Trouble," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 8, 1965.

<sup>6</sup> "Lodge Begins Duties, Meets With Viet Chief," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 26, 1965; "STUDENT UNREST CONTINUES IN HUE," *New York Times*, Aug 26, 1965; "500 in Hue Demand Elections," *Boston Globe*, Aug 29, 1965; "HUE RALLY DEMANDS GEN. THIEU'S OUSTER," *New York Times*, Aug 29, 1965; "Vietnam Student Protests, Linked to Buddhist, Erupt in Danang," *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1965; "Tourists View Cathedral: Students Threaten New Viet Upheaval," *Chicago Tribune*, Aug 31, 1965;

<sup>7</sup> "Lodge Begins Duties, Meets With Viet Chief," *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 26, 1965; "STUDENT UNREST CONTINUES IN HUE," *New York Times*, Aug 26, 1965; "500 in Hue Demand Elections," *Boston Globe*, Aug 29, 1965; "Vietnam Student Protests, Linked to Buddhist, Erupt in Danang," *New York Times*, Aug 30, 1965.

Struggle Movement—The Force to Push for Revolution *Lực Lượng Tranh Thủ Cách Mạng*—and conservative anticommunist groupings in Central Vietnam.<sup>8</sup>

The political turmoil in South Vietnam was seemingly simmering down by the end of April. Indeed, by the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the National Political Congress had laid out measures to establish a 48-man council to draft legislation for general elections. The Directorate promised to relinquish its powers following the inauguration of a national assembly.<sup>9</sup> A number of schools had reopened in Huế and Tôn Thất Đính—the new commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Corps—declared that “conditions in Huế and Đà Nẵng had returned to normalcy, all upheavals had ceased” and threatened harsh retaliation for any resumption of civil unrest.<sup>10</sup> Despite these positive claims by the government, sporadic agitation continued in Saigon, and Central Vietnam remained largely outside of the Central Government’s control. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, the Struggle Movement in Central Vietnam began mobilizing once again after Kỳ declared that his government will remain in power for another year.

Arson, vandalism, and demonstrations were levied not only against the military administration, but also American presence in South Vietnam. Protestors condemned the United States for supporting what they saw was a military dictatorship. In early June, Thích Nhất Hạnh—visiting Washington—delivered a proposal for peace in Vietnam calling for the cessation of American bombardment of North Vietnam, the reassignment of American military personnel to solely defensive roles, and the gradual removal of American troops from Vietnamese soil.<sup>11</sup> In the wake of the resurgence of antigovernment mobilization, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ reacted with force. First pacifying Đà Lạt, government forces moved into Đà Nẵng where heavily street fighting erupted between government and rebel troops. By the end of May, the Đà Nẵng Struggle Movement had been suppressed and Kỳ deployed troops to Huế. Surrounding the imperial Capitol with some 3,000 soldiers backed by tank cavalry, the rebels in Huế were suppressed by mid-June resulting in mass arrests and persecution of civilians and military personnel who had joined the rebellion.

In the aftermath of the antigovernment upheaval, some 2000 civilians were placed in detention, hundreds of soldiers were held by Military Security forces, and others were sent to the prison on Phú Quốc island. A number of civilian leaders aided by communist guerrillas to escape government persecution. As Lâm Vĩnh Thế argued, “those individuals would come back to Hue with the NLF during the 1968 Tet Offensive.”<sup>12</sup> Military officers who had aided the Struggle Movement faced imprisonment, demotion, and dishonorable discharge. On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Buddhist Chaplain Corps at the battalion and company level were disbanded by orders of the National Security Ministry effectively removing the key structure of influence the UBC had over military

<sup>8</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 113-131; Topmiller 33-41, 53-69; day-by-day documentation of events, see Đoàn Thâm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*, 58-102. Most notable was the case of Chu Tử, the editor of the newspaper *Sóng*, took a hardline stance against the activities of the “Struggle Movement.” On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, his newspaper’s headquarters was vandalized by a mob of some 1,000 protestors, burning a number of transport vehicles. Despite the attack on *Sóng*’s headquarters, Chu Tử continued his publications but was assassinated on the morning of April 16 in front of his home. During the upheavals, the “Struggle Movement” had banned the selling of key newspapers in Huế and Đà Nẵng, including *Chính Luận* and *Tự Do* (Đoàn Thâm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*).

<sup>9</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 125.

<sup>10</sup> “Sau những ngày dầu sôi lửa bỏng, Đà Nẵng đang trở về cuộc sống bình thường,” *Chính Luận*, May 6, 1966.

<sup>11</sup> “Ngay trên đất Mỹ, Thượng Tọa Nhất Hạnh trình bày 5 điểm hòa bình ở VN đòi Mỹ rút khỏi Việt Nam,” *Chính Luận*, June 5-6, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> 131.

personnel.<sup>13</sup> Nguyễn Chánh Thi—arrested on June 20<sup>th</sup>—was exiled along with his two sons to the United States on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July. Thích Trí Quang—who had begun an indefinite hunger-strike on the 8<sup>th</sup>, was airlifted from Huế to a Saigon hospital on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June and was placed under detention.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the ultimate collapse of the Struggle Movement—a defeat that would be catastrophic for the Church itself—mobilization had pushed the military administration down a path towards initiating democratic institutions. The Constituent Assembly elections would be held in September of 1966 and the Second Republican constitution completed by April of the following year. While the constitution allowed Kỳ’s cabinet to remain in effective control over the affairs of state, it also laid out procedures for elections in late 1967. Before a dozen American observers, the Presidential and the National Assembly elections would be held in September of 1967. Thiệu and Kỳ—who had joined together in a presidential ticket with military backing in late June—would be elected President and Vice-President respectively in an election that was—for the most part—“reasonably honest and reasonably free.”<sup>15</sup> Although Trương Đình Dzu—the most critical presidential candidate against the military-ticket—alleged corruption, fraud, and error in election procedures, the results were upheld by the newly elected National Assembly in early October. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1967, Thiệu and Kỳ were sworn into office thus marking the beginning of the Second Republic.

During this tumultuous period leading up to the Second Republican era, the administration of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ had revived the Political Study Program, marking the beginning of state-based initiatives to retrieve ideological leadership in South Vietnam. Paralleling the reinauguration of the PSP were a host of other measures meant to place South Vietnam on a war footing and cope with the endemic problems of politics, society, and economy that had plagued the Republic since 1963. The revival of the PSP, however, was only partly successful. Indeed, as the political upheavals in 1966 indicate, state control over political discourse was far from complete and state-messages faced substantial political rebuttal by vast sectors of civil society. Yet the revival of the PSP would lay the groundwork for continuing ideological work by the Thiệu Presidency during the Second Republic. The fact that the military ticket was victorious in the Presidential election despite adamant opposition from multiple civil societal groupings indicate that the state’s ideological work had at least some impact. Moreover, ideological work through the revived PSP demonstrates how the military administration sought to negotiate with the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” which had dominated civil politics throughout the first 20 months of the Interregnum Years. Study materials from the revived PSP indicate not only the way in which demands and ideals from society made their way into the state, these ideological texts also evidence the continuity of anticommunist discourse and how the Kỳ administration drew on ideals and narratives of the First Republic to build legitimacy for military rule. Below, this chapter turns to the ideological work of the Kỳ administration during the last 2 years of the Interregnum.

## REESTABLISHING THE PSP

<sup>13</sup> “Đề tôn giáo được phát triển công bình trong quân lực VNCH, Chấn chỉnh ngành tuyên úy quân đội,” *Chính Luận*, June 18, 1966.

<sup>14</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 130-131.

<sup>15</sup> Penniman, 84-89.

The reestablishment of the PSP in late June of 1965 came about alongside various other initiatives by the new military administration designed to stabilize the South Vietnamese society, exert state control, and eliminate all forms of social and political ills. Alongside cessation of diplomatic relations with France, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ implemented price controls, an extended curfew, declared the banning of all newspapers in the Saigon for a month, enacted austerity measures, and warned against protests and demonstrations.<sup>16</sup> Kỳ went after prostitution which proliferated after the increase of American servicemen earlier in the year.<sup>17</sup> He set up firing squad posts and sandbags were set up in the city center, next to Bến Thành Market, to publicly execute those who were deemed communists, speculators, and war profiteers.<sup>18</sup> A number of South Vietnamese envoys were dismissed from their ambassadorship for engaging in alleged corruption, holding political ideals contrary to the administration, or encouraging gambling and other social ills.<sup>19</sup> Kỳ enacted a new draft program which ceased exemption for those holding secondary school degrees, professors under the age of 30, and undergraduates who had poor school records.<sup>20</sup> And in August, Kỳ embarked on a diplomatic mission to a number of Southeast Asian countries to solidify his international presence and call for cooperation in the anticommunist war.<sup>21</sup>

These measures pointed to the attempts of the new administration to revamp the anticommunist war effort both domestically and internationally. The reestablishment of the PSP in this context highlights the role that the Program would play during the final two years of the Interregnum.<sup>22</sup> Refashioned as a “Discussion Movement” *Phong Trào Hội Thảo*—to avoid attribution to the authoritarianism of the “old regime”—the revived PSP was utilized during the Directorate Era as a mechanism to reinforce the political legitimacy of the Thiệu-Kỳ administration, transfer that “torch of righteousness” to the military, mobilize an increasingly apathetic population for anticommunist activities and war, and construct a modicum of “national solidarity” to stave off political unrest.<sup>23</sup> Like the PSP of the First Republic, the new “Discussion Program” was a means of indoctrination and propaganda to ensure that soldiers, civil servants,

<sup>16</sup> “Ky New Saigon Premier,” *New York Times*, Jun 19, 1965; “Saigon Official Calls for ‘War Government.’” *Los Angeles Times*, Jun 14, 1965; “Saigon Drops Paris, Proclaims Full War,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 25, 1965; “Viets Break With France, Warn Saigon Under Siege,” *Boston Globe*, Jun 25, 1965; “War Curbs,” *The Sun*, Jun 25, 1965; “South Vietnam Ends Ties With Paris, Charging Aid to Enemies,” *New York Times*, Jun 25, 1965.

<sup>17</sup> “SAIGON BARS DATING WITH AMERICANS,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 25, 1965.

<sup>18</sup> “Saigon Sets Up Firing Squad Posts in Crackdown,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 17, 1965; “Saigon Orders Profiteers And Terrorists Executed,” *New York Times*, Jun 17, 1965; “Viet Terrorist Executed by Firing Squad,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Jun 22, 1965

<sup>19</sup> “KHANH BEING OUSTED AS VIET ROVING ENVOY,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 7, 1965; “Saigon Sacks Khanh, 3 Other Generals,” *Boston Globe*, Aug 8, 1965.

<sup>20</sup> “Lodge Begins Duties, Meets With Viet Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 26, 1965.

<sup>21</sup> “Ky Battles View People Are Losing Control at Saigon,” *The Washington Post, Times Herald*, Aug 8, 1965; “S. Vietnam Chief to Tour Far East,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug 21, 1965; “GROWTH ALLIANCE PROPOSED BY KY,” *New York Times*, Aug 23, 1965; “ASIAN PACT URGED BY KY,” *The Sun*, Aug 16, 1965.

<sup>22</sup> The Psychological Warfare Ministry—which directed the operations of the “Discussion Movement”—understood the revived PSP to be amongst the various “urgent” tasks in aiding the “creation of a movement of nationwide participation in saving the country” as orchestrated by the Directorate (CV 3493/BTLC/VP dated 6/25/1965 in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589)

<sup>23</sup> “War Apathy Seen In South Viet Nam,” *Boston Globe*, Jul 19, 1965.

and the general population “better understand the direction and policies of the nation and the responsibility of every cadre, every citizen.”<sup>24</sup>

The first three months of the newly revived PSP was largely preparatory. A complete outline of the structure and function of the Program was not dictated until November of 1965. Evidence suggests that during this period, most administrative organs relied on the PSP procedures of the First Republic, including the reutilization of personnel who once headed study sessions as organizers and presenters.<sup>25</sup> Despite early expressed concerns over issues of military rule, national austerity, cessation of civil liberties and the delay of democratic development amongst administrative personnel and the Republican civil society at large, the Psychological Warfare Ministry claimed the “Discussion Movement” to be a success at the end of September. In a September memo to Kỳ’s office, the Đinh Trinh Chính—the Psychological Warfare Minister—described the “generation of the discussion movement across the nation” had been conducted “in accordance to an enthusiastic and open spirit,” particular in administrative organs.<sup>26</sup> Lingering questions and concerns expressed during sessions were addressed in the Minister’s review of the past 3 months in accordance to the position of the administration and requested that Kỳ implement measures to establish a more durable framework of operation for the Program. Because of the positive development of the program, the Psychological Warfare Minister believed that the “Discussion Movement” is a necessary and worthwhile investment to ensure that “personnel, cadres of all ranks absorb the ideals and policies of the nation, concurrently developing thoughts, rectifying habits, improving skills, and generating a new spirit of service in hopes of advancing the anticommunist struggle.”<sup>27</sup>

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, the Office of the Executive Commissioner laid out the formal framework of the new PSP. The structural and theoretical components of the “Discussion Movement” differed very little from the PSP of the First Republic. According to the directive signed by Kỳ himself, the “discussion session” is conceptualized by the administration as an “activity of collective study” of which the purpose is to develop thoughts, skills, and work habits in accordance to the “ideals and policies of the nation.” To ensure that this vision of “collective study” and thought development is properly enacted, each administrative organ was to establish a “Discussion Committee.” The committee would be composed of the organ’s administrative head, a “capable personnel” to organize and plan discussion sessions, and three teams of personnel who would serve as presider, presenters, and secretary of these sessions. An “inspectorate committee” would also be formed for each organ to “follow discussion activities.” Each month, 2 sessions would be held—each lasting 2 hours—with 1 session devoted to “general topics” and the other devoted to “specialization.” While specialization materials (study materials designed to develop occupation skills) would be provided by the specific administrative organ, “general

<sup>24</sup> CV 44-UBHP/CT dated 7/3/1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726.

<sup>25</sup> Handwritten comments from memos indicate the reutilization of former personnel (CV 34-UBHP/HC dated 7/16/1965 in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589). The head of the tax administration indicatively stated that “Weekly study materials for the Communist Denunciation had returned (CV 5678-QT/HDHT dated 7/3/1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726); “BIÊN BẢN BUỔI HỘI THẢO SINH HOẠT HÀNG TUẦN Ngày 16.7.1965,” in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589

<sup>26</sup> CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965 in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589.

<sup>27</sup> CV 465-BTLC/VP/PT/M dated 9/28/1965 in *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589.

materials” (study materials for political education) would be drafted and assigned by a “Directive Committee for Study Materials” composed of representatives from the Executive Commissioner Office, the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Psychological Warfare, the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Psychological Warfare would be responsible for the publication and distribution of “general materials” as well as general oversight of the “Discussion Movement.” At the end of each discussion session, a report must be sent to the Psychological Warfare Ministry for records.<sup>28</sup>

Like the PSP of the First Republic, the “Discussion Movement” served as a vehicle to articulate and disseminate the rationale and justification for a host of ideological efforts by the Republican state. The messages dispensed from key study materials pointed to the reutilization of key ideological tenets from previous administrations. This was particularly apparent during key national holidays.<sup>29</sup> Through the redeployment of these familiar themes, the military administration sought to demonstrate ideological continuity by connecting these themes with new state projects. During the week leading up to the second commemoration of the Day of National Resentment (July 20) in 1965, study materials reemphasized familiar anticommunist themes: the atrocities of the communists, the communist violation of the Geneva Accords, and the communist infiltration of the South which had sparked the war. The same study materials further deployed idea of the “Northward March” to mobilize support for Kỳ’s “Front to Liberate the North”—an organization he had first created back in May. According to one study document, the “Front to Liberate the North” was a “necessary measure” to ensure victory and laid within “our holistic and enduring people’s Revolution.” As the administration perceived it, the project to “exterminate the communists” cannot be simply isolated to the South but must be one that militarily engaged the Communist North within its own territory.<sup>30</sup> The assigned study materials

<sup>28</sup> CV 69/UBHP/CT dated 10/11/1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726.

<sup>29</sup> In September, the Psychological Warfare Ministry issued study documents focusing on commemorating the dynastic Vietnamese heroes Trần Hưng Đạo and Lê Lợi, calling for national solidarity and equating the exploits of these historical figures to the contemporary defense of the South from the “Red Chinese imperialists and their traitorous lackeys, the Communists in the North” (“Tưởng niệm và tri ân anh hùng liệt sĩ, toàn dân đoàn kết, cương quyết chống Trung Cộng xâm lăng,” cited in CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966*, PTTVNCH 29589; full-text found in CV 6856-QT/HDHT dated 9/16/1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965* TQT 3726; “Thân Thế và Sự Nghiệp của TRẦN HƯNG ĐẠO và LÊ LỢI” cited in CV 6856-QT/HDHT dated 9/16/1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726). In October and November, study documents entailed propagandistic reports of military victories by the South Vietnamese Army, speeches from Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, and a historiographic account of events leading up to the formation of the new military administration since the November Revolution to commemorate National Day on November 1<sup>st</sup> (“Thông điệp của Thiếu Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Hành Pháp Trung Ương,” “Quân Đội Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đã bẻ gãy chiến dịch mùa mưa của Việt Cộng,” and “Toàn Dân Đoàn Kết Nhất Trí,” attached to CV 7285 QT/HDHT dated 10/2/1965 in *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726). In December, study materials, once again, covered the International Declaration of Human Rights (“Tuyên Ngôn Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền” in CV 9.401-QT/HDHT dated 12/14/1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726). In a December review of the “Discussion Movement” progress, other study materials included “So sánh 3 chế độ cộng sản, Ngô Đình Diệm và Quốc Gia,” “Hiệu Triệu của TT Chủ Tịch UBLĐQG gửi đồng bào nhân ngày Quốc Khánh 1-11-1965” and “Đại Hội Toàn Quân ngày 11-9-65 và vấn đề tránh thủ nhân tâm.” (CV 04/HĐHDTL/PG dated 12/23/1965, *Báo Cáo tổng kết tình hình hội thảo toàn quốc tháng 11/1965*, PTTVNCH 29416).

<sup>30</sup> Following the 1965 Day of National Resentment commemoration, the Kỳ administration reported a limited policy of infiltration and guerrilla warfare against North Vietnam with several teams being air dropped above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel (“South Developing Force in No. Viet Nam,” *Boston Globe*, Jul 25, 1965)



justified Kỳ's 26-point program by articulating this program through a new vision of "social revolution" which sought to "increase the living standards of the entire citizenry beginning with the lowest level upward." Drawing partly on the Personalist message of the First Republic, Kỳ's program is situated as a strategic measure within the anticommunist war as well as a response to the "human demand for continuous progress." This progress would be achieved both materially and spiritually because "we recognize that humans are not mere machinery" and seek to protect "the noble spiritual value of human beings."<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, "discussion" materials also allowed the administration to reconstruct the recent history through a narration that justified military rule. In November, to celebrate National Day, the Discussion Materials were utilized to restate the administration's commitment to matters of democracy and enact the promises inherent in the November Revolution. The piece, on the one hand, acknowledged civil societal demands for "independence, freedom, democracy and social justice," but, on the other hand, argued that these yearnings had been "exploited... [by] a number of individuals who sought to replace one another to seize state power." As argued, the November Revolution was not "an accidental event" but rather a "day that marked the culmination of revolutionary struggle to achieve the demands of the people." If that day marked the destruction of the old regime, it must also mark the day of the "revolutionary construction of the future"—a message unlike what had been argued by numerous newspaper editorials since the collapse of the First Republic. However, the piece decried that the 20 months prior to the establishment of the Thiệu-Kỳ administration had been one of destruction rather than construction—a result that threatened the significance and promise of the November Revolution. Those 20 months after the November Revolution was described as a period of "chaos in every matter of politics, military, economics, and diplomacy." This chaos was blamed, firstly, on rivaling political entities who utilized "demagogy to compete for power and positions." Secondly, it resulted from communist exploitation of the deteriorating political condition to manipulate the real yearnings of the people. Indeed, what resulted was a political environment in which "every effort [from the state] never amounted to anything because every case of taking it to the streets was a political event that determined the fate of an administration." The state of domestic politics had real repercussions on the front lines as guerrilla efforts made gains in major areas in the South. According to the study document, the 19<sup>th</sup> of June marked the beginning of reversal in these trends as "the military, the vanguard of the November Revolution, once again stepped forward to lead the state and the people had completed that revolution." To realize the promise of the November Revolution, it was necessary for the military to step in to seize power in order to ensure that a "positive social revolution" would be accomplished.<sup>32</sup>

### *Seizing the Torch of "Democracy" and "Revolution"*

In 1966, key developments on both the international and domestic stage increasingly elevated the importance of the "Discussion Movement" as a mechanism for the state's ideological effort. The national agenda of the military administration laid out through speeches by Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ in early January were refashioned into study

<sup>31</sup> "Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng miền Nam, giải phóng miền Bắc," dated 7/20/1965, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT 3031; CV 452/BTLC/VP dated 9/22/1965; "Tuyên Ngôn của Chính Phủ Nhân ngày 20-7-1965," *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm "ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1965*, PTTVNCH 29400;

<sup>32</sup> "Từ cách mạng chính trị 1/11/63 đến cách mạng xã hội 1/11/65," attached to CV 8277-QT/HDHT, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726

documents for administrative organs in early February.<sup>33</sup> Following the Honolulu Conference in February of 1966, the Psychological Warfare Ministry placed emphasis on studying materials related to the successes of the Conference, particular joint speeches between United States and South Vietnamese officials on revamped American commitment to the anticommunist war and shift in strategic focus towards the countryside and social, political, and economic issues plaguing the South Vietnamese society.<sup>34</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of February, Kỳ initiated “New Society Day,” embedding the political successes and new strategic paradigm achieved through the Honolulu Conference into a national holiday to mark his vision of “social revolution” and a new unified, democratic, and stable South Vietnam. The day is marked by a press conference at the Diên Hồng Conference Hall in the early morning and “discussion” sessions at the Independence Palace in the evening.<sup>35</sup>

However, any progress achieved during this period in which the state reasserted ideological control was quickly reversed in March. The resurgence of political upheaval clearly had an effect on the operations of the “Discussion Movement.” A review by Đinh Chính Trình reported the notable “poor performance” of discussion activities beginning with the month of February. For the month of March, only 2 ministries of 14 only 12 of the 50 provinces sent in mandatory reports on sessions. Those reports that were sent in were “extremely meager” and requested that Kỳ take initiative to ensure that future reports include assessment of “the depth and degree of success of the study materials.”<sup>36</sup> Although discussion sessions were not immediately utilized by the military administration during the initial outbreak of political

<sup>33</sup> “Đường Lối Quốc Gia và Chương Trình Hoạt Động của Chính Phủ,” CV 289-VHXH/HC dated 2/18/1966, *Tài Liệu của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Tổng Bộ Văn Hóa Xã Hội, Nha Giám Đốc Văn khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia về học tập chính trị năm 1966-1968*, NVKQG 266. The study materials were crafted speeches by Thiệu and Kỳ: 1) The study material entitled “Huấn Từ của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia và Quyết Nghị của Đại Hội Toàn Quân Kỳ II ngày 14, 15/01/1966” 2) “Chương Trình Hoạt động năm 1966 của nội các chiến tranh” (breakdown of study material components found in “Biên Bản Buổi Học Tập ngày 7.3.66” in *Tài Liệu của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Tổng Bộ Văn Hóa Xã Hội, Nha Giám Đốc Văn khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia về học tập chính trị năm 1966-1968*, NVKQG 266). The former can be found in the press (“Khai mạc đại hội toàn quân, TT Thiệu Tuyên Bô: 1966: Khôi Sự tổng phân công quân sự và bình định, xây dựng nông thôn,” *Chính Luận*, Jan 16, 1966; and “Chủ Trương và đường lối của VN TỰ Do: Tài Liệu thuyết trình tại đại hội toàn quân 14-1-1966,” *Chính Luận*, Jan. 17, 1966)

<sup>34</sup> The study document “Hội Nghị Honolulu, một thắng lợi ngoại giao của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa” was assigned in February 1966 (CV 159/BTTCH-CTTL dated 4/7/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577). The materials emphasized joint speeches by Vietnamese and American officials such as those delivered on the 9<sup>th</sup> (“Tuyên Ngôn Chung của hai Chính Phủ Việt Mỹ,” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 11, 1966) and the 10<sup>th</sup> of February (“Bản Thông Cáo Chung của Tổng Thống Hoa Kỳ Lyndon B. Johnson và Tr. T. Ng-Văn-Thiệu Chủ Tịch UBLĐQG VNCH,” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 12, 1966).

<sup>35</sup> Scheduling of Honolulu-related study sessions found in “Bảng Đúc Kết Chi Tiết Tình Hình Hội Thảo Toàn Quốc trong tháng 2-1966” attached to CV 159/BTTCH-CTTL dated 4/7/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577; For the 21<sup>st</sup> of Feb., Đoàn Thêm writes: “Buổi sớm, họp báo tại nhà Diên hồng; buổi chiều một tinh hội thảo tại vườn Dinh Độc Lập, nhân “ngày Xã Hội Mới” nói về kết quả hội nghị Honolulu và xác nhận ý chí chống Cộng cùng xây dựng nông thôn và dân chủ,” p. 34, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*; full text of study materials found in newspapers: “Bài Diễn văn của Thiếu Tướng Ng. Cao Kỳ (đọc trong buổi họp báo hồi 9 giờ sáng thứ hai 21-2-66 tại Hội Đồng Diên Hồng)” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 23, 1966; “Diễn Văn của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch UBLĐQG (Đọc tại Dinh Độc Lập chiều thứ hai 21-2-66, nhân ‘ngày Xã Hội Mới’)” *Chính Luận*, Feb. 24, 1966.

<sup>36</sup> CV 159/BTTCH-CTTL dated 4/7/1966 in, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577.

upheavals, following the initial wave of the Struggle Movement, discussion sessions served as an active mechanism to defend the responses of the administration and reinforce the regime's legitimacy before demands for democracy and civil rule.

Following the Honolulu Conference, major personnel and structural changes were enacted in Kỳ's cabinet. Most notable for the "Discussion Movement" was that the Psychological Warfare Ministry was changed to the Ministry of Information and *Chiêu Hồi Bộ Thông Tin Chiêu Hồi* (BTTCH).<sup>37</sup> Reflective of the vision and strategic paradigm laid out at the Honolulu Conference,<sup>38</sup> the changes to Kỳ's cabinet marked renewed focus on pacification programs and the emphasis on social, economic, and political issues plaguing South Vietnam. It must be noted that these ideas adopted at the Honolulu Conference were not particularly novel. Indeed, as noted in previous chapters, the demand for greater attention to the social, economic, and political aspects of the anticommunist war had been championed by South Vietnamese religious leaders, political parties, and journalists since mid-1964. What marked the Honolulu Conference, however, was a public endorsement of these ideas by not only the South Vietnamese state but also the American government. Indeed, following the Honolulu Conference, pacification efforts were upscaled reaching some 125 million USD in 1967.<sup>39</sup> From the Conference, new pacification projects were implemented, cadre-training programs were reassessed and intensified, and older programs were reinvigorated with the increased flow of funds political commitment.<sup>40</sup>

Indicative of these changes was the *Chiêu Hồi* Program which was first initiated under the administration Ngô Đình Diệm in 1963. Following the collapse of the First Republic, the program faced administrative negligence, lack of funds, and inadequately trained personnel. Although the program was publicly endorsed by the US in 1965, major changes to the *Chiêu Hồi* Program did not begin until after the Honolulu Conference. This was, on the one hand, increased commitment by the South Vietnamese state to the effort, and, on the other hand, a restructuring of Program which emphasized coordination between the US's Office of Civil Operations and

<sup>37</sup> "Trong cuộc họp báo trực tiếp truyền thanh lần thứ ba TT Kỳ công bố: Cải tổ và tăng cường nội các chiến tranh," *Chính Luận*, Feb. 22, 1966.

<sup>38</sup> The Honolulu Conference was a monumental moment for American foreign policy in South Vietnam. Various joint sessions between key South Vietnamese and American officials were held in the early weeks of February to lay out plans for revamped war effort. Important speeches made by President Johnson, Thiệu, and Kỳ pointed to greater American commitment to pacification policies and the prioritization of social and economic aspects in the anticommunist war effort. As President Johnson argued in his speech at the Conference, "One front is military. The other front is the struggle against social injustice, against hunger, disease and ignorance, against political apathy and indifference" ("HISTORIC SESSION: JOHNSON, HUMPHREY HOLD MEETING HERE SEEK END TO," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 9, 1966) —a message not unlike the ideological efforts of the Directorate administration since taking office. Indeed, was at the Honolulu Conference that Kỳ publicized and laid out his vision of the "social revolution...[to] build democracy in rural areas" through construction, education, and health programs as well as agricultural aid and the increase of political sophistication amongst the peasant population ("Vietnam Pacification and What It Means," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 13, 1966). For Kỳ, South Vietnam cannot emerge victorious from the war without eliminating the political and social defects upon which communism thrived. This meant providing social justice, economic viability, and "genuine democracy" for the people of South Vietnam ("JOHNSON-KY TALKS BEGIN WITH ACCORD ON REFORMS AS A KEY TO WINNING," *New York Times*, Feb 8, 1966; "Ky Stresses War Needs," *The Sun*, Feb 8, 1966).

<sup>39</sup> John C. Donnell, "Pacification Reassessed," *Asian Survey* 7(8): 1967, 567-576.

<sup>40</sup> Ahern, Vietnam Declassified, 186-190.

Revolutionary Development Support (COORDS),<sup>41</sup> the Vietnamese Ministry of Information, and a number of other South Vietnamese agencies. By 1967, the Chiêu Hồi was no longer a program under the jurisdiction of an administrative department, but rather a full-fledged South Vietnamese ministry that coordinated with all other counter-insurgent civilian-oriented programs.<sup>42</sup> The Chiêu Hồi Program would eventually involve tremendous American involvement and worked closely with the RAND corporation in reporting, devising, and enacting pacification policies in the South Vietnamese countryside. Participation by Americans in the Chiêu Hồi Program is largely isolated to measures implemented in the South Vietnamese countryside.

While the Chiêu Hồi Program largely focused on the pacification of the countryside and the integration of defecting communist guerrillas into the Republican society, placing the Chiêu Hồi Program under the purview of the Minister of Information highlighted the shared ideological discourse between administrative branches particularly when it came to matters of political education. While no evidence suggests that Americans were actively involved in the operations of discussion or study sessions, American foreign policy and the political program of the Republican state following the Honolulu Conference became—at least formally—increasingly aligned. Nevertheless, when it came to the key political issues, notable differences were evident. For example, although Americans pushed for democratic institutions amidst the political protests in spring and summer of 1966, justifications for democracy in South Vietnam is crafted as not American-directed but rather due to the “goodwill” of the military in delivering on its promise or as a manifestation of the military’s enactment of the will of the Vietnamese people. When it came to matters of peace and negotiations, the South Vietnamese state maintained its adamant anti-neutralist position and opposed American decision to bring the NLF to the negotiation table. The South Vietnamese state laid out its own conditions for peace and, in large part, rejected Johnson’s plea for “unconditional discussion” with the enemy. Moreover, for the remainder of the Interregnum, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ continued his push for the “Northward March” to liberate compatriots above the 17<sup>th</sup> Parallel—a doctrine that was adamantly opposed by American officials.

Indeed, study materials for the “Discussion Movement” following the Honolulu Conference reflected not American perspectives on South Vietnam but rather how the South Vietnamese state responded to demands for democracy and civil rule. Amidst renewed protests in May of 1966, the Information and Chiêu Hồi Ministry began distributing study materials which placed great emphasis on the military’s revolutionary credentials and the state’s commitment to the establishment of democracy in South Vietnam. The first key study document came in mid-May entitled “Developing Democracy” *Xây Dựng Dân Chủ* which depicted the military as the champion of South Vietnamese democracy. Referencing a litany of speeches

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<sup>41</sup> Directed primarily at the communist insurgency in the countryside, COORDS was a unifying entity which merged new and pre-existing pacification under a single coordination structure and actively worked with South Vietnamese officials and agencies in devising, enacting, and reporting counter-insurgent activities (David Biggs, “American in An Giang: Nation Building and the Particularities of Place in the Mekong Delta, 1966-1973,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 4(3): 2009, 139-172; Jeremy Patrick White “Civil Affairs in Vietnam,” *Center for Strategic & International Studies*, 1-13).

<sup>42</sup> J. A. Koch, “The Chieu Hoi Program in South Vietnam, 1963-1971,” *Rand: Advanced Research Projects Agency*, Jan. 1973; J M Carrier and C A H Thomson, “Viet Cong Motivation and Morale: The Special Case of Chieu Hoi,” *Rand: Advanced Research Projects Agency*, May 1966.

delivered by Nguyễn Cao Kỳ and Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, the document articulated the position of the military administration which acknowledged that “democracy is the fundamental aspect for victory over the communists” although that democracy must be adapted to the “realities of the country to the circumstances of society, the political acumen of the citizenry and the destructive state of war caused by our communist enemy.” Beyond the democratic values articulated in speeches, the document also highlighted key measures implemented by the military regime to lay the foundations for democracy including the formation of the “Democratic Advisory Council” to draft procedures for general elections, state decree which set the deadline for a democratically elected government by October of 1967, and the convening of the “National Political Congress” in April.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, measures toward democracy originated not from any demands by groups within the Republican civil society but were rather enacted in accordance with the spirit of the “National Military Conference” in early January of 1966.<sup>44</sup>

Completely omitting the history of civil mobilization for democratic, civil rule since November of 1963, the document instead emphasized the “goodwill” of the military government and argued that these measures reflected the government’s commitment to “justice and democracy” because “the government had collected the opinions of other political entities, other organizations to formulate opinions that reflected the people in the broadest of ways.” Democracy, through the administration’s depiction, came not from societal upsurge, but rather something granted and enacted by the Republican state. Indeed, the document argued that the government was not beholden to any specific interest group (implicitly condemning political pressures from the Republican civil society), called upon its citizenry to support the measures laid out by the Republican State, and warned against communist propaganda which “distorted” the truth about the state’s commitment to democracy. Democracy, according to the text, was a guarantee of the government, but one that must be built on “maturity and unity.”<sup>45</sup>

In late June, the assigned study document sought to rewrite the recent history of the “Struggle Movement” in Central Vietnam. Contesting the widespread opinion that it was the firing of Nguyễn Chánh Thi that initiated the Buddhist-led rebellion, study materials argued that the “Struggle Movement” abused the “sanctioned leave” of Nguyễn Chánh Thi to push for a Constituent Assembly. Indeed, the piece argues that the position of the “Struggle Movement” transitioned continuously from support of Thi, to a demand of civil rule, to requesting American intervention, and finally to an opposition to American presence. According to the document, “the struggle faction had utilized violent measures, creating chaos in urban centers like Đà Nẵng, Huế...and Saigon.” These violent measures are cited as arson, disruptive protests, vandalism, and assassination against not only the state but also nationalist groups like the VNQDD. Emphasizing the chaos that reigned during the upheaval and the targeting of nationalist groups, the piece depicts the Struggle Movement as one that was communist inspired and their push for democracy as a farce to aid the communist insurgency. The Struggle Movement, as depicted, “on

<sup>43</sup> See also study document “Diễn Từ của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia tại Đại Hội Dân Quân Toàn Quốc ngày 24-5-1966,” dated 5/24/1966 in, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577

<sup>44</sup> “Xây Dựng Dân Chủ,” in CV 5115-BTTCH/CTTL/ST2 dated 5/12/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

the one hand calls for the enactment of democracy...but on the other hand prioritized activities that opposes democracy; truly the ‘struggle’ faction had contradicted themselves.”<sup>46</sup>

In contrast to the “struggle faction,” the piece depicts the government as filled with “goodwill”—“the government had vigorously tried, shown patience, and endured to find a peaceful resolution and satisfy the rightful aspirations of the citizenry.” Citing the monk Thích Liêu Minh who supported the government during the unrest, the piece glorified Thiệu and Kỳ as “those within the military leadership that displayed determination and care for the affairs of the nation...[and] we should recognize that the present government have much more goodwill that previous administrations.” Indeed, like the study material in May, recent “achievements”—such as the convening of the “National Political Congress,” the drafting of procedures for general elections, and the opening up of the Directorate to civilians—were deployed to corroborate the claim of “goodwill” on the part of the administration. Alongside these listed achievements, the document further argued that military campaign in Đà Nẵng—which had resulted in street battles between rebel and loyal troops—was described as a security effort to “protect the property and life of the citizens at this locale” and was the most “difficult, complex, and prudent” campaign that sought to “spare blood and bones and civilian casualties.” The piece finally concludes by raising the specter of the communist threat, reporting the various state programs to combat communism in the countryside, and arguing that “security” in the countryside was the precursor for the enactment of democracy—a democracy that must be enacted through “order...not in chaos that continually disrupts everyday social life.”<sup>47</sup>

Similar study documents drafted by the Information Ministry and the Directive Committee for Study Materials emphasizing the military regime’s role in establishing democracy in South Vietnam were distributed for the 1966 Day of National Resentment in July and National Day in November.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, strategic deployment of democratic successes to reinforce the legitimacy of the military regime was a direct instruction of the Information Ministry’s “Propaganda and Information Plan” for the 1966 National Day celebration. The communique instructed that government cadres and news articles should “use the successes of the elections as evidence” of proper enactment of the military-directed social revolution. Furthermore, these propagandistic materials should “acknowledge the good will and determination of the government to create democracy, revolutionize society and encourage communist extermination ideals.” Indeed, in conjunction with these propagandistic efforts through television, radio, newspapers, communiqués, and pamphlets aimed at the broader population, the Ministry of Information would oversee the organization of “discussion sessions” amongst civil servants and soldiers and instructed the Directive Committee for Study Materials to draft study documents on

<sup>46</sup> “Ôn định hậu phương để chiến thắng Cộng Sản và xây dựng dân chủ,” attached to CV 012-BTTCH/VPHĐ/PG dated 6/24/1966, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Day of National Resentment: “Đoàn Kết chuẩn bị quốc hội lập hiến xây dựng dân chủ, chiến thắng cộng sản” attached to CV 7518-BTTCH/CTTL/PG dated 7/14/1966, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656; “ÔN ĐỊNH HẬU PHƯƠNG ĐỀ CHIẾN THẮNG CỘNG SẢN VÀ XÂY DỰNG DÂN CHỦ,” in CV 12-BTTCH/VPHĐ/PG dated 6/24/1966, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656. National Day: “Quốc Khánh 1-11-1966” attached to 023-HĐHDTL/VPHĐ/PG dated 10/20/1966, *Tổ Chức lễ Quốc Khánh năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29572; other study materials included speeches from Thiệu: “Nhất Lệnh của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia gọi toàn thể quân lực Việt Nam Cộng Hòa nhân ngày Quốc Khánh 1.11.66,” “Hiệu triệu đồng bào của Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Quốc Gia Nhân Ngày Quốc Khánh 1-11-1966,” *Tổ Chức lễ Quốc Khánh năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29572.

the significance of the 1966 National Day commemoration, the significance of the anticommunist war, and the successes of the social revolution.<sup>49</sup>

In 1967, these themes of the military's commitment to and deliverance of democracy in South Vietnam continued. In March and April of 1967, the assigned study material covered "the Direction of Rural Reconstruction for Year 1967." While emphasizing the anticommunist reasons for pacification, the document articulated the new vision of pacification—of which the "New Life Hamlet" served as the quintessential example—along a narrative of establishing "democracy" which highlighted the creation structures through which "the people can express their own ideas to the representatives of the state." As argued by the piece, only through enacting these mechanisms of representation will the people "enthusiastically engage with the tasks of the village, viewing these tasks as their own and the collective spirit can be engrossed day by day."<sup>50</sup>

In June, the assigned study material was on the Second Republican Constitution—a lengthy document which was preceded by a speech delivered by Nguyễn Văn Thiệu on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April. The success of the Constituent Assembly elections in September of 1966 and the successful drafting of the Constitution became utilized by Thiệu to argue that the military regime had supported the formation of democracy in South Vietnam and had never "placed any coercion towards the National Assembly, but rather entirely immersed and sympathized" with the will of the people. Indeed, for Thiệu, "the enactment of the structure of governance in 5 months as of today had articulated once again the honesty and trustworthiness *thành tín* of the military...[to] enact as quickly as possible a government chosen by the people."<sup>51</sup>

And in October of 1967—leading up to the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the November Revolution—study documents declared the democratic promise of the November Revolution had finally been achieved. Depicting the past regimes of incompetent, avaricious, and powerless, the piece argued that it was only when the military retook control of the state in June of 1965 did South Vietnam properly returned to its revolutionary path. Indeed, the military—which was "solely concerned with completing the spirit of the revolution"—had not only successfully established a democratic system, that system was also anticommunist and politically stable. Deploying the litany of democratic achievements during Directorate rule which ultimately resulted in the formation of the Second Republic, the piece highlighted how rule under Thiệu and Kỳ had not successfully laid the foundations for democratic rule in South Vietnam, the military had also stabilized the political conditions in the nation, enacted new programs of rural pacification and development, secured increased diplomatic support, resolved much economic fluctuations, and enacted land reforms. With the Thiệu-Kỳ ticket winning a plurality of the vote (34.8%) in the Presidential Elections, the piece argued that "November 1<sup>st</sup> 1967 commemorates the [November] Revolution's victory...[and the] great spirit of the Revolution will finally be fully actualized on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November 1967." Signified in the piece, it was the military that had begun the November Revolution through a coup and it was again the military that had completed

<sup>49</sup> "Chương Trình Công Tác Thông Tin Tuyên Truyền Trong Dịp Quốc Khánh 1/11/1966" attached to CV 10334/BTT/CTTL/CT-2/PGb dated 10/12/1966 in *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577

<sup>50</sup> "ĐƯỜNG LỐI XÂY DỰNG NÔNG THÔN TRONG NĂM 1967" attached to CV 034/HĐHDTL/VPĐH dated 3/29/1967, *Báo cáo học tập tại Nha Quảng Trị Nhân viên về đường lối xây dựng nông thôn trong năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29737.

<sup>51</sup> "Hiến Pháp Việt Nam Cộng Hòa" attached to CV 3934/TBTTCH/HĐHDTL/STI dated 5/24/1967, *Tài liệu của Ủy ban hành pháp tw v/v tổ chức các cuộc hội thảo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29738.

that Revolution through the formation of the Second Republic. The military—not the Buddhists, the Catholics, journalists, students, or nationalist parties—were the true revolutionaries, and it was the military who were the champions of the democratic promise.<sup>52</sup>

### *Greater Unity and the Presidential Election of 1967*

The vision of “democracy” as articulated through “discussion” sessions existed in conjunction with how the military regime conceptualized “unity” *đoàn kết*. Unity, as described in study materials, was the solution needed given the catastrophic political environment following the collapse of the November Revolution. This “serious situation” is blamed partly on the communist guerillas but also on “the military and civil leaders in the recent past which were unable to accomplish the duties that the people had placed on them.” Consequently, “disunity” was widespread throughout the nation causing a chaotic situation that threatened the very survival of the South Vietnamese nation. Through their reconstruction of history, PSP materials argued that the military had “timely stepped forward to resolve the chaos [and] create glorious opportunities for the entirety of the people to resolutely exterminate the enemy and save the nation.” “Unity,” in this sense, was the unity of the South Vietnamese people, the administration, and the military around a common program and ideal of adamant anticommunism. As argued, “in this time of life and death for the nation, [the people must] join with the government in war to level all forms of putrid injustice, poisonous disunity, to create and consolidate the South, and become the fort of true and enduring freedom and democracy.”<sup>53</sup>

Recall that the idea of “democracy” in the immediate months after the November Revolution had been envisioned as something enacted through “oppositional” politics waged upon the state by an autonomous civil society. That civil society would mobilize and raise demand upon the state to ensure that whatever regime that would come in power would be beholden to its citizens. The democratic vision of the new military administration, however, redefined the role of civil societal by seeking to incorporate that mobilized civil society into the anticommunist war effort. That war effort was envisioned as a struggle in which “the government and the people are one.” To be part of that war effort, study materials argued that citizens must participate in the military—whether to join the army to “fight and exterminate the communists at the front” or “participate in the reserve to protect the rear.” Building that “unity,” however, also meant that administration must address social and economic issues plaguing the Republic. The new administration broadcasted in study sessions that it would seek to “guarantee social justice” by cracking down on war profiteers, ensuring protection and economic support for the poor, land reform, and greater taxation on the wealthy. Only by addressing these issues,

<sup>52</sup> “Quốc Khánh 1.11.1967, kỷ niệm đệ tứ Chu Niên Cách Mạng thành công,” attached to CV 907/BVH-VKTV/HC, *Tài Liệu của Phủ Thủ Tướng, Tổng Bộ Văn Hóa Xã Hội, Nha Giám Đốc Văn khố và Thư Viện Quốc Gia về học tập chính trị năm 1966-1968*, NVKQG 266.

<sup>53</sup> “Toàn dân đoàn kết xây dựng miền Nam, giải phóng miền Bắc,” dated 7/20/1965, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT 3031; “Nhân Dân và Chính Quyền Nỗ lực chiến thắng,” dated Aug. 1965, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT 3031; “TƯỜNG NIỆM VÀ TRI ÂN ANH HÙNG LIỆT SĨ TOÀN DÂN ĐOÀN KẾT CƯƠNG QUYẾT CHỐNG TRUNG CỘNG XÂM LẤN,” dated Sep. 1965, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965*, TQT 3726; “Đoàn Kết chuẩn bị quốc hội lập hiến xây dựng dân chủ, chiến thắng cộng sản,” attached to CV 7518-BTTCH/CTTL/PG, *Về Phong Trào Học Tập Năm 1966-1975*, PTTVNCH 32656.



argued one study material, would the Republic be able to “guarantee lasting freedom and democracy.”<sup>54</sup>

Like the theme of “democracy,” the concept of “unity” manifested most prominently following the Buddhist-led insurrection in spring and summer of 1966. In early June, the Ministry of Information enacted the “Unity Campaign” which sought to utilize diverse means of indoctrination and propaganda to combat the political influence of the Buddhist-led “Struggle Movement” through the use of communiqués, pamphlets, and intensified study sessions. Focusing primarily on the administrative and military personnel in Central Vietnam, the state-directed campaign would strategically “deemphasize” news information that casted the government in a negative light and “prioritize the distribution” of news article that demonstrates the “practical and sincere aid of the government towards the people in general and the people of Đà Nẵng and Huế in particular.” This control of information aimed at discouraging protests, “generat[ing] deep empathy between the people, army and state, between religions, between organizations,” “restor[ing] national power in Đà Nẵng” and prepare the citizenry for the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections. In conjunction with information control over reporting, the Ministry of Information would also intensify efforts in study sessions by forming “Presentation Troupes” organized by the Directive Committee for Study Materials to enact widespread study sessions in hopes of explaining the actions of the government and redirecting the discourse.<sup>55</sup>

The expansion of the “unity” concept came in April of 1967 after the establishment of the completion of the Second Republican Constitution. Although Kỳ had promised to transfer power to the Constituent Assembly once the Constitution was formed, established procedures dictated that the Directorate and the Central Executive Committee would retain its functions until the inauguration of the Presidency.<sup>56</sup> Through the “Greater Unity of the People Program,” the Thiệu office worked in conjunction with the Chiêu Hồi branch of the Information Ministry to promulgate not only a new anticommunist propaganda initiative, but also build legitimacy for the military even as South Vietnam approaches the Presidential elections of 1967.

This matter is worth dwelling into. Thiệu and Kỳ announced their Presidential bid in June of 1967—each running on different tickets. However, over a three-day secret meeting between the two tickets, Thiệu and Kỳ opted to run on the same ticket, representing the South Vietnamese military. Because each ticket must first be approved by the National Assembly and then vetted by the Central Election Council—a committee headed by the presiding judge in the Supreme Court of Appeals—there were regular complaints and allegations of corruption and unfairness during the vetting process. Indeed, of the 17 which passed through the National Assembly, only 11 finally made it to the final list. The ticket for Dương Văn Minh—who was then exiled in Bangkok—threatened to divide the vote of the military electoral bloc, was rejected by the Central Election Council, and the decision was upheld by the National Assembly. A host of less notable tickets and those deemed to be “pro-Communist or pro-Neutralist” were also rejected as well. Further grievances were raised against the Thiệu-Kỳ ticket on the grounds that these men—who held the highest offices in the land—must first request a leave of absence from their

<sup>54</sup> “Nhân Dân và Chính Quyền Nỗ lực chiến thắng,” dated Aug. 1965, *Hồ Sơ v/v Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1958-1974*, BYT 3031

<sup>55</sup> CV 243-BTTCH/VP dated 6/10/1966, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29577.

<sup>56</sup> Lâm Vĩnh Thế, 137-138.

administrative and military positions up until the election date per Article 17 of the Constitutional election laws. The National Assembly, however, voted in favor the Thiệu-Kỳ ticket on the grounds that the article was only binding to “persons holding popularly elected positions.”<sup>57</sup>

As the date for the Presidential election neared, the military ticket faced a tremendous level of opposition from civilian candidates as well as multiple segments of civil society over not only the military’s control over state organs, but also the continual press censorship.<sup>58</sup> This contentious atmosphere over the legality and legitimacy of the military ticket transformed propagandistic efforts to combat communism and bolster Republican policies into a means to propagandize for the military ticket. The “Greater Unity” program emphasized the political indoctrination of “friends” classified as the “cadres, civil servants, and military personnel” across the South and the redirecting of popular discourse through television, newspapers reports, and cultural production. Strategically, the program sought the nationwide thought reform of civil servants and soldiers through discussion sessions while simultaneously propagating the speeches and programs of the state. In newspapers, emphasis would be laid on reporting the successes and vision of the Chiêu Hồi Program. Utilizing “ralliers”—communist guerillas who had defected—the program would form “presentation troupes” to advocate for the Program and legitimize the Republican state.<sup>59</sup>

While utilizing anticommunism as a focal point for unity and mobilization, the “Greater Unity” program also served to bolster the legitimacy of the military amidst a contentious Presidential race. Study documents following the initiation of the “Greater Unity” program became means to articulate the political platform of the military administration. Although the official Presidential campaign would not begin until August, the fact that Thiệu and Kỳ held the supreme offices in South Vietnam and directed propagandistic activities, much of the messages distributed through these channels, particularly materials for discussion sessions, served to bolster the political platform of the military-ticket. Indeed, study materials for the 1967 celebration of May Day in South Vietnam did not just recount a non-communist history of working-class mobilization since 1886, it laid out the labor programs of Thiệu and Kỳ to address issues of wages, union representation, and relations between laborers and owners. The establishment of democracy—a narrative which the military seized has seized upon to place itself as the champion—was redirected towards the economy to articulate a program for “economic affluence and social justice for the entirety of the people.” Drawing on the Directorate’s economic programs since May of 1966, the document demonstrates a litany of achievements under the Thiệu-Kỳ administration including the expansion of unions, trade-based

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<sup>57</sup> Penniman, 57-58.

<sup>58</sup> “Civilian Rivals Demand Kỳ, Thiệu Resign Post,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1967.

<sup>59</sup> CV 2942/UBNDHTLC/TU dated 7/3/1966, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm “Ngày Quốc Hận” 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720. In accordance to the Chiêu Hồi vision laid out during the First Republic, the political purpose of the “Greater Unity” stratagem was not merely encouraging the defection and reintegration of communist guerrillas into the Republican society, but also the “return” of those who were already part of the Republic to the values of the nation. This was particularly true to those who had joined with the “Struggle Movement” in the antigovernment uprising. Indicative of this, one of the primary ideals of the program was to “protect—harmonize—forgive misunderstands,” reconcile and “eliminate all thoughts of vengeance” which were blamed on colonialists and communists. While many of those who once joined the “Struggle Movement” would be pardoned by the formation of the Second Republic, the issue at hand for the South Vietnamese state was to propagate ideals that would prevent such upheavals from reoccurring.

training, new jobs from foreign investments, and social welfare in matters of food distribution, housing, family support, and wages.<sup>60</sup>

These efforts to bolster the legitimacy of the Directorate continued into 1967 Day of National Resentment commemoration. Indeed, study sessions and commemorative activities became a means to propagate the military's position on matters of peace, negotiations, and the resolution of war. Evident of this, the Information Ministry's propaganda plan for the commemoration was first vetted by Nguyễn Cao Kỳ before it was implemented.<sup>61</sup> As scheduled, major speeches delivered during commemorative activities entailed key statements from Thiệu and Kỳ which promulgated the ideals of "Greater Unity" program. Study materials distributed for the commemoration, for the most part, repeated familiar themes of denouncing communist atrocities, communist provocation, and placing blame of war on communist violation of the Geneva Accords while South Vietnam was merely defending its national sovereignty.<sup>62</sup> However, these study materials were crucial for laying out the Thiệu-Kỳ's ticket position on the issue of peace in South Vietnam—the key issue of the 1967 Presidential election.

The outline for peace as articulated through discussion sessions demonstrates a hardline position when it came to negotiations with the enemy. Indeed, these materials maintained the idea that South Vietnam was fighting a righteous war in which they "fight to survive" against communist aggression. These materials articulated the "position of the government" in detail and set conditions for negotiations: communist troops must be withdrawn prior to any form of negotiations; when it came to American troops stationed in South Vietnam, American retreat would only be agreed upon when "peace is guaranteed, when the Republic of Vietnam is entirely secure and have complete national sovereignty to build and develop"; any negotiations with the South Vietnamese guerrillas were adamantly opposed. Indeed, while articulating conditions for peace, study materials placed emphasis on "final victory" of the Republic in the war as placed the "cessation of communist infiltration" as the primary condition for any negotiations.<sup>63</sup>

The conditions for peace articulated through study sessions stood in stark contrast to peace conditions set by other candidates. Âu Trường Thanh, for example, was a professor who had quit the Kỳ administration in 1966 in protest of the regime's "police state tactics." In 1967, he submitted his candidacy for Presidency on a platform of immediate ceasefire and more open negotiations.<sup>64</sup> His campaign ran the slogan of "No more bombs" and his slate symbol was a bomb with a big "X" through it.<sup>65</sup> Although rejecting "peace at any price," Thanh believed in working "through discussions within the new elected government and legislature" to arrive at a proposal for peace.<sup>66</sup> Thanh's presidential bid, however, was quickly cut short after he was

<sup>60</sup> "Ý Nghĩa và lịch sử ngày Quốc Tế lao động 1.5" and "Đại Cương và chương trình lao động của Nội Các Chiến Tranh 1967," attached to CV 3031/TBTTCH/KHTLC dated 4/24/1967, *Tài liệu của Ủy ban hành pháp tw v/v tổ chức các cuộc hội thảo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29738

<sup>61</sup> CV 2969/TBTTCH/KHTLC/KH2 dated 5/7/1967, *Tổ Chức lễ kỷ niệm "Ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720.

<sup>62</sup> "Kế hoạch tâm lý chiến ngày 20/7/67," *Tổ Chức lễ kỷ niệm "Ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720; CV MOT/18.7.67/Stc dated 7/19/1967, *Tổ Chức lễ kỷ niệm "Ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720; "Chương Trình Buổi Hội Thảo về Chính Sách Đại Đoàn Kết Dân Tộc Tổ Chức Tại Rap Rex sáng ngày 20.7.67," *Tổ Chức lễ kỷ niệm "Ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720.

<sup>63</sup> "Kế hoạch tâm lý chiến ngày 20/7/67," *Tổ Chức lễ kỷ niệm "Ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1967*, PTTVNCH 29720

<sup>64</sup> "Peace Candidate Lays Smear Campaign to Ky," *New York Times*, July 10, 1967.

<sup>65</sup> "South Vietnam Goes Political," *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 8, 1967.

<sup>66</sup> "Vietnam Peace Candidate," *Boston Globe*, July 7, 1967.

linked to a communist organization and rejected by the Central Election Council. Other key civilian candidates like Trần Văn Hương, Phan Khắc Sửu, and Trường Đình Dzu all had peace proposals that stood in opposition to the military-ticket's platform calling for escalation of the war.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, early on, the military slate maintained a hardline position against negotiations and placed conditions of communist withdrawal prior to any consideration of peace talks during their campaign. Thiệu, in August, argued that to bring the war to an end, his government would “convince the Communists that they could in no way inflict a defeat on South Vietnam.” To do so, Thiệu promised the intensification of the war effort to force the communists into a plea for peace.<sup>68</sup> The fact that many of the Presidential candidates outlined moderate positions on peace eventually forced the military-ticket to retreat from its hardline position. By mid-August, Thiệu shifted from non-negotiations towards promising that he would request “to have a meeting to talk about negotiated settlement” if elected President. He further promised to pause regular bombing of North Vietnam for a week as a “symbolic gesture.”<sup>69</sup> By the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, Thiệu declared his willingness to talk to the communist guerrillas “any place, any time”—a position that even moderate candidates were unwilling to broach—though he later clarified that such “talks” would only be informal.<sup>70</sup> Despite these claims, Thiệu and Kỳ continued with plans to expand the South Vietnamese military by 65,000 men and push its pacification agenda throughout the month of campaigning.<sup>71</sup> Thiệu maintained throughout the campaign the importance of the military in South Vietnamese politics and rejected the role of civilian leaders in directing the war. Indeed, for the incumbent, political parties were “incapable” of successful prosecution of the war and only the South Vietnamese armed forces “were strong enough to combat communism.”<sup>72</sup>

As evident during the 1967 Presidential elections, despite the intensified propagandistic efforts of the Directorate administration, governmental messages by 1967 could only be seen as partially successful. Thiệu and Kỳ would win the Presidency and Vice-Presidency; however, that military ticket—already favored to win—achieved victory at a margin much lower than expected.<sup>73</sup> The runner-up was the ticket of Trường Đình Dzu who ran on a radical peace platform. Taken together, the votes for the civilian candidates Dzu, Sửu, and Hương were higher than those cast for the military-ticket. Indeed, as South Vietnam entered the Second Republic, the military men who held the highest offices in the land faced tremendous opposition from a civil society which had honed its anti-government mobilization over the course of the Interregnum. South Vietnam, by November of 1967, was an incredibly politically diverse society which saw divisions along not only conservative and radical voices, but also between religious groupings and opposition to the military-directed state. Prominent voices differed on matters of

<sup>67</sup> “2 South Viet Candidates Ask Peace Talks with Viet Cong,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 4, 1967.

<sup>68</sup> “3 Viet Candidates Offer Divergent Peace Plans: Thieu, Huong, Suu Open Drives to Win September Presidential Election,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 4, 1967.

<sup>69</sup> “Thieu Tells his plans for peace,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 12, 1967.

<sup>70</sup> “Thieu ‘willing’ to negotiate with Viet Cong ‘Any Time,’” *The Sun*, Aug. 28, 1967.

<sup>71</sup> “Saigon Outlines Pacification Plan,” *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 1967

<sup>72</sup> “Thieu says only Army able to fight communists, parties incapable,” *Boston Globe*, Aug. 31, 1967.

<sup>73</sup> In mid-August, the military ticket was expected to win at a whopping 65% majority (“Kỳ Reportedly Expects to receive 65% of Vote,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 19, 1967) which was later lowered to 40% towards the end of the campaign (Thiệu Predicts He will win with 40% of the vote,” *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1967).

peace and negotiations as well as the issue of democracy, the escalation of war, and American presence in South Vietnam.

The second half of the Interregnum can only be seen as the beginning of the state's efforts to re-seize ideological control. Although the military administration was not entirely successful building legitimacy, the ideals of "unity" and the state's demonization of the Struggle Movement would find its way into civil society. Certain tickets for both the presidential and senatorial elections deployed the "Greater Unity" language to mobilize support.<sup>74</sup> And the Buddhist Secular Institute, itself, would eventually be forced to acknowledge its own "Struggle Movement" as "illegal."<sup>75</sup> These, however, were only limited, if not superficial, successes. As South Vietnam entered the Second Republic, ideological work and pacification programs would be greatly intensified—particularly following the Tết Offensive in early 1968. Indeed, as the 1967 elections came to a close, radical voices in civil society had faced a dramatic defeat at the polls. Below, we explore the reasons for such a defeat and the political prominence of Catholics—rather than the Buddhists—as South Vietnam entered the Second Republic.

#### THE FATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

In 1966 and 1967, three key elections were held to establish the core structure of governance for the Second Republic: Presidential elections, the Constituent Assembly elections in September of 1966 and the National Assembly elections (which came on the same day as the Presidential elections). Coming after the collapse of the Buddhist-led uprising in Spring and Summer of 1966, these elections resulted in dramatic victory for conservative voices within the Republican civil society. Beginning with the Constituent Assembly elections, conservatives dominated the election results with Catholics—making up just 10% of the population—taking 35 of the 117 seats, and the VNQDD and the Đại Việt Party overtook 12 and 9 respectively. The takeover by conservative voices was demonstrated most clearly through the National Assembly

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<sup>74</sup> The "Greater National Unity" ticket for the senatorial race, for example, vowed to "unify the Vietnamese fatherland and enact Greater Unity of the people" alongside a platform emphasizing anti-authoritarianism, democracy, anticommunism, resolving underdevelopment, social reform, and national security ("Liên Danh 2 Đại Đoàn Kết Quốc Gia," *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 13, 1967); Hà Thúc Kỳ, who came in 5<sup>th</sup> in the Presidential race with 7.3% of the vote, ran on a campaign promising to enact "Greater National Unity" as well as holistic social reform before discussing "peace" (Dân không đại khờ bỏ phiếu cho lưu manh nên khoogn thành vấn đề có đảo chánh hay không," *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 19, 1967). Even the most vocal critic of the military ticket—Trương Đình Dzu—was forced to acknowledge the greater unity project of the administration, but argued that such a policy must be "non-discriminatory and divisive" ("Ứng cử viên Trương Đình Dzu 'tỏa xông hữu đệt' suốt 2 giờ trong cuộc đấu võ mồm với báo chí," *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 8, 1967). The state's proffer of the Greater Unity policy was deployed by at least one oppositional civil organization to contest the Law 023/67 which ratified the new Charter of the Unified Buddhist Church. According to a distributed communique, the organization stated that the policy was "contradictory in reality" in that the ratification of the Charter "unwittingly created harmful suspicion within the ranks of the people" ("Khối liên hữu định hướng Cộng Đồng Quốc Gia Việt Nam Nhận định về Bầu Cử và Chánh Sách Đại Đoàn Kết DT," *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 22, 1967).

<sup>75</sup> By the end of July, the Secular Institute had acknowledged the illegality of the Struggle Movement but opposed the indefinite detention without trial of those who participated in the protests ("Lập trường mới của Viện Hóa Đạo: yêu cầu chính quyền đem xử Hội Đồng Viện như các tội phạm và tuyên bố cuộc tranh đấu của Phật giáo là bất hợp pháp," *Chính Luận*, Aug. 2, 1966); The new position headed by Thích Thiện Hoa was more moral than it was political. The acknowledgment of the illegality of the Struggle Movement by the Secular Institute (and even require the government to declare it was such) was so that bonzes and the Buddhist leadership be "courageously dealt with as violators of the law" and be treated as such before the court.

elections. The Senate—in which 60 seats were voted through entire 10-person slates rather than individual representatives—the two Catholic slates led by Nguyễn Văn Huyền (who served as a civilian on the Directorate following reorganization in June 1966)<sup>76</sup> and Nguyễn Gia Hiến (the secular leader of the militant Greater Unity Force)<sup>77</sup> took 20 of the 60 Senate seats. The 1<sup>st</sup> place victory, however, went to the largely independent “Farmer-Worker-Soldier” slate which won with close to 1 million of the votes. The slate led by former Cần Lao member, Huỳnh Văn Cao, came in fourth, the slate representing the joined force of Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài came in fifth, and the Revolutionary Đại Việt Party led by Nguyễn Ngọc Kỳ came in sixth.<sup>78</sup> As reported by the *New York Times*, Catholics made up almost half the Senate, about 15 were former Cần Lao members and 27 were North Vietnamese emigres.<sup>79</sup> As for the Lower House, the results were far more diverse and, according to Penniman, seemingly determined by name recognition. Buddhists seized 46 seats, though were followed by the Catholics with 35, Hòa Hảo with 13 and the Cao Đài with 5. Militant Buddhists were reportedly represented through 8 of the Lower House members and militant Catholics with 15.<sup>80</sup>

The rise of the conservative bloc, as argued in the previous chapter, began with the opposition to the PNSC movement back in September and October of 1964. During the emergence of peace movements under Phan Huy Quát, Catholics, nationalist parties, and religious sects from the Mekong River delta formed an antigovernment bloc which opposed Quát’s handling of the Buddhist peace movement of Thích Quảng Liên and the weakness of government in responding to the necessity of the anticommunist war and foreign neutralist overtures. Many of these political alliances were maintained throughout the remainder of the Interregnum. Indeed, although staunchly anticommunist and rejected the peace mobilization of the Buddhists, these groups were also deeply opposed to a military-dominated state and continued their push for civil rule.

Within that diverse conservative grouping, militant Catholics led by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh were perhaps the most prominent and vocal. The following section briefly covers the relationship that Catholics and Buddhists had with the military-led state following the upheavals in spring and summer of 1966. As will be shown, while Catholics received multiple political victories for the remainder of the Interregnum, the Buddhists faced continuous controversy and sectarian splits within their Unified Church. Ruptures in the Buddhists Church prevented any orchestrated mobilization for the various elections in 1966 and 1967. Catholics, on the other hand, achieved tremendous representation in the Constituent Assembly elections and subsequent Catholic mobilization aided their achievements during the National Assembly election. Consequently, the structures of governance as South Vietnam entered the Second Republic was markedly dominated by Catholic and conservative voices. Prioritizing national security over issues of “True Democracy and Freedom,” the rise of the Catholic bloc at the dawn of the Second Republic—which were more ideologically aligned with the military-led state—would have lasting impact on the ideological and political direction of the remainder of the Republican era.

<sup>76</sup> “10 Civilians join Junta in Saigon,” *The Washington Post*, Jun 7, 1966; he was also a spokesperson for the Catholic Citizen’s Bloc (“Five Generals get prison in Viet Uprising,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1966);

<sup>77</sup> Nguyễn Gia Hiến had also been cited as a supporter of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (“Viet Catholics control newly-elected senate,” *Boston Globe*, Sep. 7, 1967.

<sup>78</sup> Penniman, 93-95; “Catholic Victors in Saigon Senate: make a Strong Comeback,” *New York Times*, Sep. 7, 1967;

<sup>79</sup> “Thieu Pledges Wider War if Search for Peace Fails,” *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1967.

<sup>80</sup> Penniman, 100-101.

### *Catholic Mobilization*

The Catholics had viewed the Thiệu-Kỳ administration with ambivalence since the return to military rule in the summer of 1965. Early on, military rule preoccupied Catholic concerns and during a June 20<sup>th</sup> Conference, the Greater Unity Force publicly condemned the military nature of the new regime. According to Nguyễn Gia Hiến—the secular leader of the organization—the collapse of the Quát administration cannot be seen as a “victory...because our emphasis is to support a civil administration, instead a military administration had come to us, thus our struggle must continue.”<sup>81</sup> Like other civil societal groups, Catholics, nevertheless, supported the anticommunist adamancy of Thiệu-Kỳ administration and supported the administration’s 26-point plan which focused on social, political, and economic problems. The issue at hand, however, was not the anticommunist ideals of Republican state but rather the question of implementation. Catholics, for the most part, distrusted the military administration to properly manage and resolve the political, religious, and social divisions which had manifested since the collapse of the First Republic.<sup>82</sup>

However, with the eruption of Buddhist-led protests calling for the elections for a National Assembly and the government acquiescence to Buddhist’s demands, Catholics opposition quickly became redirected towards the upcoming Constituent Assembly elections. Indicative of this opposition was Catholics’ refusal to attend the National Political Congress initiated by the military administration April of 1966<sup>83</sup> as well as their boycott of commemorative activities scheduled for the Day of National Resentment by hosting their own anticommunist rallies.<sup>84</sup> For the Catholics, the political instability of the present condition made immediate general elections unfavorable—a position which had been vocalized by Catholic militants during their mobilization against the Quát administration. While Catholics shared with the militant Buddhists support for civil rule, internal documents from the Greater Unity Force demonstrates widespread demonization of Buddhist mobilization and a fundamental rejection of Buddhist’s advocacy for “democracy.”

Immediately following the outbreak of Buddhist insurrection in March, the Greater Unity Force distributed a communique which casted the militant Buddhists as “sectarians” and charged that, since November of 1963, “they [the Buddhists] were avaricious and had largely succeeded in holding a monopoly over the revolution.” The Buddhist’s call for “democracy” paralleled a scheme to “end the war through negotiations” which signified intentions to establish “a weak

<sup>81</sup> CV 028913/TCSQG/S1/A/K dated 6/30/1965, *Về Hoạt Động Công Giáo Năm 1965*, PTTVNCH 29536.

<sup>82</sup> “Một vài nhận định đầu tiên về việc quân lực chấp chánh,” *Xây Dựng*, Jun. 21, 1965; on the 24<sup>th</sup>, *Xây Dựng* writes: “Dầu đồng ý hay không đồng ý với giải pháp quân sự, dự luận các giới đã tỏ ra tán đồng bản chương trình của nội các chiến tranh gồm 26 coogn tác khẩn cấp để thực hiện 3 nhiệm vụ thiết yếu, đẩy mạnh cuộc chiến tranh chống cộng,” cited from “Tư tán đồng đến ‘trông và chờ,’” *Xây Dựng*, Jun. 24, 1965; “Tư chính sách đến thực thi,” *Xây Dựng*, Jun 29, 1965.

<sup>83</sup> Of the 170 invited delegates, only 92 attended the Congress with neither representative from Buddhist nor Catholic groupings (Đoàn Thêm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*, 65)

<sup>84</sup> Reason cited by the Greater Unity Force was that they did not get invitations to attend commemorative activities in time (CV 0357/VP/TU dated 7/18/1966, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20.7.1966*, PTTVNCH 29571). Internal documents, however, show that this was a false accusation. Catholic independent commemorative activities: CV 896-BH/NA/CT/1M dated 8/3/1966, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20.7.1966*, PTTVNCH 29571; CV 7102/Y6/E dated 7/18/1966, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20.7.1966*, PTTVNCH 29571; CV 123/CT/NA/2/CD/M dated 7/19/1966, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm ngày Quốc Hận 20.7.1966*, PTTVNCH 29571).

civil government that is communist sympathetic, neutralist sympathetic.” For the Catholics, widespread discontents did not reflect “democratic ideals”—as advocated by the Buddhists—but rather the desire for “change” that would reverse the deleterious conditions of war plaguing society. Most dangerous for the Catholics was the opening that Buddhist mobilization gave for communist propaganda and guerrilla activities. Indeed, if Buddhist demands for elections were met, Catholics feared that Buddhists would dominate and “complete a communist scheme, struggle through democracy for the communist to have a legal standing to destroy the political structure of the South.” While rejecting the Buddhist’s demands for immediate general elections, the Catholics pushed for a “democracy in accordance to time periods.” For the Catholics, the enactment of democracy must be “adapted to the necessity of national security.” The calls by the Buddhists were depicted as “ignorant demands for democracy” which could potentially aid the communists. While acknowledging the Constituent Assembly as a “just and earnest demand of the entirety of the people,” elections must only occur when “security and public order” and “free expression of opinions” can be ensured. Without these guarantees, Catholics pointed to the possibility of communist infiltration or governmental manipulation of the electoral process.<sup>85</sup>

In April, Catholics began their counter-mobilization against the Buddhists. Since their protest of the Quát administration, Catholics had built a robust anticommunist bloc which entailed diverse collaboration with nationalist parties and religious sects from the Mekong River Delta. A Greater Unity Force-directed conference held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May reported representatives from not only the organization’s nationwide branches, but also the VNQDD, the Đại Việt Party, the National Labor Union, veterans’ organizations, and the Committee for Communist Victims.<sup>86</sup> Conceptually, Catholics viewed this diverse grouping as a “anticommunist-nationalist force” *lực lượng quốc gia chống cộng* that opposed the political demands of the Buddhist Secular Institute. For the Catholics, this “anticommunist-nationalist force” must take action in the face of national threat posed by the militant Buddhists.<sup>87</sup> Operationally, the Greater Unity Force had devised mechanisms to evade governmental censorship, had a method of propaganda dissemination, held regular conferences, drafted their own internal “study materials,” and held their own “discussion sessions.”<sup>88</sup> Throughout April and May, the South Vietnamese National

<sup>85</sup> “Thủ hoạch định một đường lối hoạt động của các lực lượng quốc gia trước thời cuộc VN hiện nay,” dated 3/21/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>86</sup> CV 251/UBHP/VoP/QV/2 dated 5/5/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>87</sup> “Nhận Định của Lực Lượng Đại Đoàn Kết,” dated 3/25/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689; CV 012062/TCSQG/S1/D/M dated 4/14/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689; CV 12085/TCSQG/S1/Đ/K dated 4/16/1966, PTTVNCH 29689; CV 235/UBHP/VoP/P2 dated 4/24/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>88</sup> Censorship evasion: CV 028001/TCSQG/S1/A/K dated 6/27/1965, *Về Hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1965* PTTVNCH 29536; propaganda dissemination: CV0239/PTB/KH.2 dated 7/4/1966, *Về Hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1965* PTTVNCH 29536; CV 17156/TCSQG/S1/A/K dated 4/29/1965, *Về Hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1965*, PTTVNCH 29536; “phiếu trình thủ tướng,” dated 5/3/1965, *Về Hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1965*, PTTVNCH 29536; study sessions: “Biên bản” for session dated 5/13/1965, *Về Hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1965*, PTTVNCH 29536; study materials: the internally distributed Catholic newsletter *Thông Tin Công Giáo* often came with “materials” at the end. These were specifically geared towards political education. One notable is “Thủ vạch một chương trình nghiên cứu và học hỏi chính trị,” dated 6/12/1966 which goes into political philosophy and how to conduct analysis, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689. The folder PTTVNCH 29536 *Về Hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1965* illustrate the depth of Catholic mobilization and demonstrates how state-sanctioned meetings (such as masses, ceremonies, and religious gatherings) were politically utilized by Catholics as precursors for demonstrations and distribution of political leaflets.



Police reported a litany of student-based mobilization directed by the Greater Unity Force, anti-Struggle Movement propaganda, and antigovernment communiques. Slogans displayed during May decried the “pusillanimous attitude” of the administration before Buddhist demands, opposed the Struggle Movement, condemned military and administrative personnel who joined the Struggle Movement, and demanded that communists’ sympathizers must be excised from the administration before the enactment of a National Assembly.<sup>89</sup> And in mid-April, The Archbishop in Saigon declared the inauguration of nationwide “Catholic Youth Groups” as an armed self-defense force to ward off a potential communist takeover and combat the Struggle Movement.<sup>90</sup>

Catholic opposition to general elections only heightened after the passage of Law 21 and 22 dated the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 1966 which laid out legal procedures for the election of the Constituent Assembly. Decrying the Constituent Assembly as “a store that cheaply sold the Constitution,” Catholics opposed measures laid out on numerous grounds. For one, Catholics argued that Law 22 provided potential for the regime to control who could vote, manipulate results, and stifle public information about contesting candidates. Beyond these allegations of voter suppression, Catholics pointed to Law 21 and argued that the Constituent Assembly lacked any real power to contest any decisions of the Directorate. Most notably, Catholics pointed to article 20 which legally allowed the Directorate to have the final say if the Assembly is unable to reach a 2/3 majority and that decision. Moreover, the Constituent Assembly did not have any powers beyond drafting the Second Republican Constitution. Indeed, this meant that the enactment and revision of the Constitution was placed into the Directorate’s hands and not the Constituent Assembly. As the piece argues, “the ultimate decision always remains in the hands of the Chairman of the Directorate and the power of the Chairman is larger than that of the Assembly.”<sup>91</sup> A petition in opposition to the Constituent Assembly was delivered in mid-August signed by the “Citizens’ Front of Religions” headed by the Greater Unity Force of Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh. Representative signatures came from the Catholics, Buddhists, Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo. The petition, however, lacked any signatures from the two most dominant nationalist parties—the VNQDD and the Đại Việt.<sup>92</sup> Most important, however, was that the petition called upon religious groups to boycott the scheduled Constituent Assembly elections in September.<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, up until the end of August, opposition by Catholics and their allies to the Constituent Assembly elections remained adamant. The Catholics critiqued not only the problems of the Constituent Assembly elections, but also decried the legitimacy of the military administration. An “Official Statement” delivered by the Catholic-headed “Citizens’ Front of

<sup>89</sup> CV 235/UBHP/VoP/P2 dated 4/24/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689; “các biểu ngữ do đoàn biểu tình của khối Công Giáo mang theo trong cuộc biểu tình sáng ngày 15-5-1966,” attached to CV 677/NA/CTM dated 5/16/1966, PTTVNCH 29689; CV 273/UBHP/Vop/QV/2 dated 5/16/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>90</sup> Đoàn Thêm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*; “Trên 5.000 đồng bào Công Giáo di cư biểu tình tuần hành ở Biên Hòa Cương Quyết phá tan âm mưu thiết lập chính phủ với CS, quốc hội có đại biểu CS,” *Chính Luận*, Apr. 19, 1966;

<sup>91</sup> “Nhận định của khối công dân các tôn giáo và đoàn thể chính trị về hai sắc luật số 21 và 22 ngày 19.6.1966 ấn định tổ chức và thể thức bầu cử quốc hội Lập Hiến,” dated 7/12/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>92</sup> The representative of the Unified Buddhist Church was Thích Pháp Tri rather than Thích Tâm Châu or Thích Trí Quang.

<sup>93</sup> “Thông cáo của Mặt Trận công dân các tôn giáo và đoàn thể chính trị,” dated 8/18/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

Religions” in late August exemplifies the Catholic’s position. With drafts printed in both Vietnamese and English, the “Statement” deployed conventional narratives in South Vietnamese anticommunism to rewrite the recent history and place blame for the horrid conditions of the country on the military administration. Despite the “cheerful atmosphere full of hope [for] the future” that followed the November Revolution, the various administrations that rose to power were either “weak and artificial” (Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ), dictatorial (Nguyễn Khánh), “stubborn” (Trần Văn Hương), or “reactionary” (Phan Huy Quát). Indeed, for the Catholics, the military administration that came to power in 1965, too, was incompetent and problematic as the previous four. In a narrative twist, the “Statement” linked the Thiệu-Kỳ administration to the Quát administration that came before it by arguing that “the majority of the main machinerier [of the Kỳ administration] were held by Quát’s fellows.” Moreover, the 26-point plan was something that derived from the Quát administration “in order to rock people to sleep and was completely defeated.” Promises of Honolulu Conference and the regime’s program for “unity” amounted to nothing as South Vietnam faced “defeats on political and military fields [while] economic measures [were] implemented without any sense of responsibility.”<sup>94</sup>

Beyond opposition to the military regime, the “Statement” demonstrates how Catholic political position in August of 1966 was a mixture of values derived from both the anticommunist rhetoric of the First Republic as well as the “revolutionary” and “democratic” imperatives that followed its collapse. Indeed, the Catholics claimed for themselves that “torch of revolution.” Harkening to the “suffering” experienced under feudalism, French Colonialism and the communist-initiated war, the “Statement” proclaimed that “the Citizens’ Front of Religions realizes its duties, is determined to promote the Union of the Nation and her people, and from this union, to rebuild the country according to the aspirations of the whole population.” The “revolution” envisioned through this “Statement” was the return to civilian rule which would establish a government that could “truly represent all popular forces, all genuine nationalist groups...[establish] the edification of a democratic system, gather all available potential forces to efficiently fight Communism...[and] bring peace to Southeast Asia and the World as a whole.”<sup>95</sup>

Moreover, reflecting widespread ambivalence towards American foreign policy, Catholics also called upon foreign powers—particularly from the United States—to give support which emphasized “spiritual assistance” rather than “material aid.” What was meant was diplomatic support for “a government in the hand of deserved persons who had fought near their fellow-countrymen and sacrificed their life for the cause of the Motherland, persons who have a very clean, patriotic past which constitutes as a warrant to the present” rather than the generals and incompetent leaders which had come to power in the last 3 years. While confirming “the presence of allied forces” as “necessary,” the “Statement” further argued that “US policy applied in South Vietnam is in need of more delicacy and cleverness in order to efficiently assist the Vietnamese people in hopes of quickly reaching...their real democratic Revolution and maintain a fundamental [role] in the actual war.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> “Tuyên cáo quốc dân của Mặt Trận Công Dân Các Tôn Giáo,” dated 8/27/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite such opposition to both military rule and the measures adopted by the military regime, Catholic political positions seemingly took a turn in early September as the date for the Constituent Assembly elections neared. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of August, Fr. Trần Du—General Secretary of the Catholic Citizen’s Bloc which worked conjointly Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh<sup>97</sup>—began publicly advocating for an alternative position on the Constituent Assembly. The priest argued that rather than boycotting the elections, Catholics should participate by forming a voting bloc uniting anticommunist citizens to prevent the takeover of communist sympathetic or neutralist entities. As a corollary to this strategy, the Catholic Citizen’s Bloc demanded that the administration review and recant the various judicial rulings that were applied “in accordance to pressures from groups that were oppositional to the Catholics.” Alleging pro-Buddhist bias amongst the various regimes following the November Revolution, the Bloc pushed for release of those they viewed were wrongly imprisoned through “revolutionary judgments,” harkening back to the trials of Đặng Sỹ and other former members of the Diệm administration through the Revolutionary Court in 1964.<sup>98</sup> According to the Bloc, the slogan of “revolution” had been abused to attack the Catholic community through mobilization to “exterminate the Cần Lao, [deeming] the Cần Lao as ‘the enemy of Buddhism.’” Like the position held by Catholics during major demonstrations in June of 1964, the Bloc decried the paradigm of “old and new” as a way to divide the nationalist forces within South Vietnam and beneficial to the communist enemy. Harkening the regime’s project for “unity,” the Bloc argued that unity could only be achieved when the injustices of the past—particularly the wrongful imprisonment and persecution of Catholics—were redressed.<sup>99</sup>

Up until election date, the Catholic Citizen Bloc mobilized across various provinces of the South through rallies, conferences and meetings. Petitions, communiques, and statements highlight a reversal of opposition to the military government and vowed participation in the upcoming elections. Communiques from these gatherings articulated the position of the Kỳ administration. As argued, “the state is currently placing all its efforts into the development of democratic governance, enacting social justice, and creating happiness for the people.”<sup>100</sup> The Kỳ government had in fact responded quite timely and positively to the demands of the Catholics. Kỳ held a conference with the Catholic Citizen Bloc on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August to discuss the issue<sup>101</sup> and sent a direct letter to Fr. Trần Du promised to “examine every case of injustice, particularly if it relates to freedom and property of the plaintiff.” Kỳ, furthermore, requested that the priest “contact the plaintiffs or their families to present to the Office of the Executive Commissioner a list with full detail regarding the cases.”<sup>102</sup> The Ministry of National Defense, as well, promised cooperation by allowing the Catholic Citizen Bloc visitation rights to prisoners held.<sup>103</sup> Although lacking conclusive evidence that the Bloc changed the anti-election position held by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh and the Greater Unity Force, calls to boycott the Constituent Assembly

<sup>97</sup> 1967 documents listed both Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh and Fr. Trần Du amongst the 8 priests who formed the “Organizational Committee” of the Catholic Citizen’s Bloc. The Bloc was formally directed by the Archdiocese in Saigon though political activities were primarily dominated by Catholic priests and laymen (“Phiếu Trình Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch” dated 7/28/1967, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689).

<sup>98</sup> CV 055/66/CDCG/VN/TTK dated 10/31/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>99</sup> CV 036/66/CDCG/VN/TTK dated 8/10/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>100</sup> “Kiến nghị của khối Công Dân Công Giáo xứ Hà Đông,” dated 9/2/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>101</sup> CV 049/66/CDCG/VN/TTK dated 9/26/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>102</sup> CV 7225-HP/VP dated 9/10/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>103</sup> CV 3275/TBAN/NCH/YTXH/K dated 10/25/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

elections were greatly diminished by early September. By the 6<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Trần Du had joined with Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh to form a political bloc demanding the release of not only Catholic prisoners but also Buddhist ones which were recently arrested during the summer and spring upheavals. During the last week leading up to general elections, National Police reported that “although the Catholic Bloc do not declare their support of the Constituent Assembly elections, priests continue to quietly advise their sheep to participate in the elections.”<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, despite Catholic’s opposition to the Constituent Assembly election in August, it is clear that Catholics would be well represented in the Constituent Assembly itself. The political backtracking regarding electoral participation—late as it may have been—boded well for Catholics, politically. Catholic success during the Constituent Assembly elections, furthermore, set the stage for mobilizing activities for the subsequent Presidential and National Assembly elections in 1967. Indeed, the Citizen’s Front of Religion took a very different approach to the elections in 1967. A communique distributed by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh’s organization in June promised to “positively mobilize the citizenry to participate in all upcoming elections to create a robust polity, a Government beholden to its people, and with enough legitimacy to resolve all domestic and diplomatic matters.”<sup>105</sup> In the final week of the month, Catholics reorganized politically at the behest of the Archdiocese in Saigon. Aiming to ensure legitimate and widespread participation, the various Catholic-based organizations began an internal election process to place lay members at the head of their political arms. Priests like Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh and Fr. Trần Du were demoted to an “advisory” role to present an image of formal separation between church and politics.<sup>106</sup>

While Catholic organizations critiqued the entrance of Thiệu and Kỳ into the Presidential race and called for their resignation to “avoid all exploitation of administrative power or fraud,” Catholic activities following the passage of the Second Republican Constitution highlight closer ties to the military-led state. Catholics, for one, had achieved a number of notable victories following the Constituent Assembly elections. Apart from being well represented in the Assembly, the Kỳ administration made good on its promise to review cases of individuals who were “wrongly” imprisoned through the Revolutionary Court. For the 1966 National Day celebration, as part of Kỳ’s amnesty program, 9 individuals imprisoned with ties to the Diệm administration were released in commemoration of National Day. Among those released was Trần Kim Tuyền—the former head of the Strategic Hamlet Program under Diệm. A number of high-profile individuals, however, were still held though had their sentences commuted from life imprisonment to 5-years, including Đặng Sỹ and Nguyễn Văn Y—the former Director of the National Police.<sup>107</sup> Thiệu—a Catholic convert—and his administration was invited in multiple occasions in 1967 to attend religious ceremonies, including the mass to commemorate 4<sup>th</sup>

<sup>104</sup> “Báo Cáo Chánh Trị Đặc Biệt” attached to CV 029794/TCSQG/S1/D/M dated 9/9/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

<sup>105</sup> “Thông cáo của Mặt Trận Công Dân Các Tôn Giáo,” dated 6/13/1967, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29867.

<sup>106</sup> “Phiếu trình Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch: Khối Công Dân Công Giáo” dated 7/28/1967.

<sup>107</sup> SL 362/CT/LĐQG/SL cited in Đoàn Thêm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1966*, 199; “NINE DIEM BACKERS RELEASED BY SAIGON,” *New York Times*, Oct 27, 1966; “South Vietnam Government declares political amnesty,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 2, 1966.

anniversary of Pope Paul IV coronation,<sup>108</sup> the death of the anticommunist Bishop Lê Hữu Từ,<sup>109</sup> and the annual Commemoration of Vietnamese Catholic Martyrs.<sup>110</sup> In another sign of good faith, Kỳ administration also approved the construction of a new Jesuit seminary in Saigon.<sup>111</sup>

### *The Rupture in Vietnamese Buddhism*

While Catholics gained grounds politically, the UBC, on the other hand, faced major setbacks resulting from the military suppression of the Struggle Movement. Buddhists, like the Catholics, publicly called for the boycott of the Constituent Assembly elections. However, unlike the Catholics who backtracked politically, Buddhists maintained this boycott of the Constituent assembly elections on the grounds that those arrested for participating in the Struggle Movement must either be tried or be set free. While the boycott of the Constituent Assembly elections partly explains the relatively poor showing the Buddhists had in the Constituent Assembly, the Unified Buddhist Church effectively faced a crisis of leadership following the Buddhist-led insurrection in summer and spring of 1966. Resultantly, the Buddhist congregation was divided between the militant bloc led by Thích Trí Quang and the more moderate one led by Thích Tâm Châu. The former would be later called the Ân Quang faction while the latter the Quốc Tự. Although once the site of much antigovernment mobilization, the Secular Institute remained under the control of Thích Tâm Châu following the split in the UBC. Moreover, prior to each of the major elections in 1966 and 1967, internal strife resulting from the split shook the Buddhist Church preventing any major mobilization to elect specific candidates or slates into the institutions of government.

Seen as the champion of “peaceful struggle,” Thích Tâm Châu—the formal leader of the Unified Buddhist Church—had continually advocated for less extreme tactics and pushed for negotiations with the administration during the Struggle Movement. As other esteemed Buddhist leaders resumed struggle during the last days of May in 1966, Thích Tâm Châu called for all bonzes to cease immolation and protest activities, though demanded that the military administration return power to a different regime.<sup>112</sup> Negotiations were conducted between Buddhist delegations led by Thích Tâm Châu and the Directorate to resolve the crisis at hand.<sup>113</sup> But, despite acquiescence by the Directorate to include 10 civil representatives into its body as well as form a “Civilian-Military Council,” Thích Tâm Châu had little control over the unfolding events in Central Vietnam, and, even worse, members of his own congregation. Indeed, as Thích Tâm Châu moved towards negotiations with the administration, militant bonzes condemned his

<sup>108</sup> “Phiếu Trình Trung Tướng Chủ Tịch UBLĐQG về buổi lễ kỷ niệm đệ IV Chu Niên ngày Đấng Quang Đức Giáo Hoàng Đệ Lục,” dated 6/30/1967, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29867.

<sup>109</sup> “Thiệp mời Lực Lượng Tự Vệ Công Giáo Việt Nam,” signed by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh for 7/30/1967, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29867.

<sup>110</sup> Lê Thánh Tử Đạo Việt Nam: “Phiếu trình trung tướng chủ tịch v/v mời trung tướng dự Thánh Lễ ngày 1/9/1967,” dated 8/30/1967, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29867.

<sup>111</sup> “Le Directeur General de la Reconstruction et de l’Urbanisme Au Reverend pere Jean Desautels, SJ. Responsable du College des Peres Jesuites” dated 11/30/1967, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29867.

<sup>112</sup> “TT Tâm Châu xác định: sẽ từ chức viện trưởng nếu Thượng Tòa không thể hòa giải được Chính Phủ và Tu Sĩ tranh đấu.” *Chính Luận*, May 31, 1966; “Chiều 30-5 TT Tâm Châu Tuyên Bố Trong Cuộc Họp Báo Trao Quyền cho Chính Phủ Chuyển Tiếp,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 1, 1966.

<sup>113</sup> “Sau khi TT Thiện Minh bị mưu sát, mặc dầu những phần tử quá khích muốn phá vỡ cuộc đàm phán, Lãnh tụ Phật Giáo và Chính Phủ đã thỏa hiệp,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 3, 1966.

leadership and direction with some resigning from their religious posts in protest.<sup>114</sup> Appeals by the monk to cease protest fell on deaf ears as protests resumed in Summer of 1966. By mid-June, the rupturing in the Buddhist Church became increasingly polarized as Thích Tâm Châu responded to accusations by directly attacking Thích Trí Quang for his “abuse of power” and the Secular Institute for disobedience.<sup>115</sup>

In the months leading up to the Constituent Assembly elections, the Buddhist Church faced dire political circumstances. The Buddhists, after all, had faced a crushing defeat following the collapse of the Struggle Movement. Faced with such reality, attempts to reorganize the Church and lay out a new direction of “struggle” were initiated in early July<sup>116</sup> following a few successes that Thích Tâm Châu had seized through negotiations with the administration.<sup>117</sup> Misgivings, internal dispute, and opposition to the “peaceful” methods of Thích Tâm Châu placed discussion at a standstill and, by the second week of July, Thích Tâm Châu refused to attend subsequent meetings on the premise that he was facing death threats.<sup>118</sup> As for Thích Trí Quang, he was continuing his hunger-strike on a hospital bed. The onus of leadership was placed on Thích Thiện Hoa to replace Thích Tâm Châu as the interim head of the Secular Institute.<sup>119</sup> While developments under the leadership Thích Thiện Hoa, was more moderate than the months before,<sup>120</sup> stalls in talks with the administration to release those imprisoned for their participation

<sup>114</sup> “Khởi xướng cuộc đấu tranh bạo động đòi bầu cử Quốc Hội Lập Hiến trong một thời gian ngắn nhất, TT Trí Quang: ‘Phật Giáo Tây Chay Bầu Cử,’ *Chính Luận*, June 5-6, 1966.

<sup>115</sup> “Thượng Tọa Tâm Châu trong văn thư đề ngày 16-6: Phản đối đấu tranh bạo động và vô kỷ luật,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 18, 1966; “Nguyên văn lá thư của Thượng Tọa Tâm Châu gửi quý vị T. Tọa Hội Đồng VHĐ,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 20, 1966

<sup>116</sup> “Mặc dù Việt Hóa Đạo không chia rẽ, PG vẫn chưa quyết định được đường lối cho giai đoạn mới,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 5, 1966.

<sup>117</sup> Early on, Thích Tâm Châu was allowed to retain his position as head of the Unified Buddhist Church, was officially approved by other leaders of the Secular Institute to represent the Buddhists in negotiations with the government, and increasingly moved closer to reconciliation. (“Đức Thắng Thông lệnh cho TT Tâm Châu, và toàn thể Phật Giáo đô tìm gặp giải pháp đẹp nhất để ổn định,” *Chính Luận*, Jun. 29, 1966; “Được sự tán đồng của Đức Tăng Thống và Phật Giáo miền Trung, Phe ôn hòa nắm quyền kiểm soát VHĐ PG và Chính quyền sẽ thỏa hiệp,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 1, 1966). Talks with the Kỳ administration in late June were relatively positive for Thích Tâm Châu who secured promises of amnesty for bonzes and those who participated in the Struggle Movement. (“Hành động của một số PT trong mấy tháng qua là do sự hiểu lầm TT Kỳ Phúc đáp TT Tâm Châu về Việc giải tỏa các chùa, thả người bị giam,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 2, 1966). Indeed, hundreds were released by the administration in subsequent days which further bolstered the reverend’s legitimacy (“Trước sự hiện diện của Thượng Tọa Tâm Châu, 283 Tăng Ni Phật Tử bị giam đã được trả tự do hôm qua,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 6, 1966).

<sup>118</sup> “Hội Đồng Viện Hóa Đạo Cương Quyền Xúc Tiến Chấn Chinh Nội Bộ gửi tối hậu thư cho TT Tâm Châu buộc phải xuất đầu lộ diện trong vòng 24 tiếng,” *Chính Luận*, Jul 14, 1966; “HĐ Viện Hóa Đạo lại họp tại chùa Ấn Quang trình Đức Tăng Thống Quyết Định,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 16, 1966; “TT Tâm Châu đã gặp Thiêu Tướng Kỳ, TT Tâm Châu xác nhận TT bị hăm dọa ám sát,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 18, 1966 excerpted from *Dân Tiến*.

<sup>119</sup> “Sáng nay (25-7) Viện Hóa Đạo Họa tại chùa Ấn Quang, TT Thiện Hoa: Quyền Viện Trường,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 26, 1966.

<sup>120</sup> One of his first actions as the new head of the Secular Institute was to declare that the Institute would not take responsibility for any self-immolation or suicides (“Thông cáo mới nhất của TT Thiện Hoa, quyền Viện Trường Viện Hóa Đạo không chịu trách nhiệm,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 27, 1966). By the end of July, the Secular Institute had acknowledged the illegality of the Struggle Movement but opposed the indefinite detention without trial of those who participated in the protests (“Lập trường mới của Viện Hóa Đạo: yêu cầu chính quyền đem xử Hội Đồng Viện như các tội phạm và tuyên bố cuộc tranh đấu của Phật giáo là bất hợp pháp,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 2, 1966); The new position headed by Thích Thiện Hoa was more moral than it was political. The acknowledgment of the illegality of the Struggle Movement by the Secular Institute (and even require the government to declare it was such) was so that

in the Struggle Movement pushed the Secular Institute to publicly declare its opposition to the Constituent Assembly and boycott of general elections just two weeks before election day.<sup>121</sup> Deprived of its two most esteemed leader, the Buddhists, in contrast to the Catholics, were unable to settle its disputes with the Kỳ administration that could justify participation in the electoral process.

Circumstances for the Buddhists only briefly took an upturn following the Constituent Assembly elections. Kỳ had waited until the day before the election to send out feelers that the regime was open to further negotiations.<sup>122</sup> Within days of Kỳ's invitation, Thích Tâm Châu returned to Quốc Tự Pagoda to resume his position as head of the Secular Institute while Thích Trí Quang ended what was effectively a 100-day fast and returned to the Ân Quang Pagoda.<sup>123</sup> While the Church regained its most esteemed leaders, the rupture that had publicly manifested since June would soon plague the Vietnamese Buddhism once again.<sup>124</sup> Conferences in October held to discuss reelection of the Secular Institute leadership quickly devolved into continuous infighting and chaos between those who supported Thích Tâm Châu and those who advocated for Thích Trí Quang. Consequently, Thích Trí Quang resigned from his position as General Secretary of the Monastic Institute and held separate meetings to form a new Secular Institute based in Ân Quang with Thích Thiện Hoa as its head.<sup>125</sup> Despite opposition from multiple factions within the Church,<sup>126</sup> Thích Trí Quang, however, upheld the elections in Ân Quang and formed a separate Buddhist leadership from that of the Quốc Tự Pagoda—a separation that would be maintained for the remainder of the Republican era.

Thích Tâm Châu remained formally acknowledged as the leader of the Unified Buddhist Church despite the internal rebellion led by Thích Trí Quang. After the formal split between the

bonzes and the Buddhist leadership be “courageously dealt with as violators of the law” and be treated as such before the court. This was a method that, on the one hand, rebuilt legitimacy for the Church and, on the other hand, removed criminal charges from the congregation as a whole. In an interview, Thích Thiện Hoa argued that to take responsibility as a leader of the Buddhist Church meant to “inherit the reality that Buddhism is in difficult times and had faced defeat,” and it was the leadership that must take the responsibility for the Struggle Movement and not its congregation (“1 giờ với quyền Viện Trưởng Thiện Hoa,” *Chính Luận*, Jul. 29, 1966 excerpt from *Dân Chủ*).

<sup>121</sup> “Phật giáo không hợp tác trong việc bầu cử Quốc Hội cho đến khi các nguyện vọng được thỏa mãn,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 16, 1966.

<sup>122</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, Kỳ sent a direct letter to Thích Thiện Hoa to move the Secular Institute back to the Quốc Tự location (which had been under occupation by security forces since June) and promised to resolve any unjust imprisonment of protestors (“2 văn thư chùa TT Kỳ gửi LM Trần Du, TT Thiện Hoa,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 13, 1966).

<sup>123</sup> “Tình hình Phật giáo gay go khi TT Tâm Châu trở về,” *Chính Luận*, Sep. 16, 1966.

<sup>124</sup> While militant Buddhists of the congregation rejected Thích Tâm Châu's return, the Reverend found support amongst the Theravada faction which advocated for reconciliation with the administration (Giáo hội Theravada và Tăng Già Bắc Việt bác bỏ kết quả cuộc họp Ân Quang,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 27, 1966.

<sup>125</sup> “2 giờ chiều 21-10, tại Việt Nam Quốc Tự Đại Hội bất thường Phật Giáo Khai mạc chỉ họp 1 buổi bầu ban chỉ đạo mới Viện Hóa Đạo,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 22, 1966; “Đại hội Phật giáo thống nhất khai mạc trong cảnh hỗn loạn và có súng nổ,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 23-24, 1966; “Cuộc tranh chấp bằng ‘sức mạnh Phật tử’ bắt đầu biểu tình từ Quốc Tự tới Ân Quang chống hai Thượng Tọa Trí Quang và Quảng Liên,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 25, 1966.

<sup>126</sup> The separatist move by Thích Trí Quang was quickly met with protestors who condemned Thích Trí Quang for sowing division within the Church. The Theravada congregation as well as other Buddhist organizations rejected the election of Thích Thiện Hoa to replace Thích Tâm Châu (“Cuộc tranh chấp bằng ‘sức mạnh Phật tử’ bắt đầu biểu tình từ Quốc Tự tới Ân Quang chống hai Thượng Tọa Trí Quang và Quảng Liên,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 25, 1966); “Văn đề nội bộ Phật Giáo thêm gay gắt: TT Tâm Giác Tố cáo cuộc họp Ân Quang là âm mưu chia rẽ,” *Chính Luận*, Oct. 26, 1966.

two Buddhist factions, Thích Tâm Châu moved to ensure the separation of Buddhist activities from political activities in accordance to new determinations established by the conference of the World Buddhists recently held in Bangkok.<sup>127</sup> He further supported the exclusion of the phrase “the Almighty” *đấng tối cao* from the Constitution’s preamble—a move opposed by Catholics who decried the move as atheistic.<sup>128</sup> For roughly a year following the split in the UBC, Thích Tâm Châu sought to mend the relationship between the military-led state and his Buddhist congregation. Indeed, by mid-April, Thích Tâm Châu had established a “working agreement” with the military administration.<sup>129</sup> Generally believed to be smaller than the Ân Quang faction, the Buddhists at Quốc Tự nevertheless had seized several victories on the political stage including the government’s acquiescence to call a truce with the guerrilla forces marking the 1967 Vesak holiday<sup>130</sup> and support for the remodeling of the Quốc Tự Pagoda.<sup>131</sup> Thích Tâm Châu, furthermore, had established an international presence by becoming a founder and the first Vice-Chairman of the World’s Buddhist Sangha Council in 1966.

However, despite these gains, the crisis once again hit the Buddhists in the month leading up to the September elections. In March, Thích Tâm Châu had begun to covertly collaborate with the military administration to ratify a new UBC Charter which would effectively stifle the influence that central militants had over the Church.<sup>132</sup> In mid-July, the new Charter was ratified by Law 23/67 which took the Ân Quang faction by surprise.<sup>133</sup> Deeming the Charter illegal and an attempt by the administration to destroy the Buddhist religion, Thích Trí Quang—relatively quiet since the split—began pushing for mobilization through a newly formed “Committee to Protect the Charter.”<sup>134</sup> Alongside the issue of peace and negotiations, the Charter became a hot topic issue for Presidential candidates in August who weighed in to condemn the military ticket. Faced with publicized controversy over the Charter, Thích Tâm Châu was forced to resign from his position as head of the Secular Institute in mid-August though he maintained control over the Quốc Tự Pagoda.<sup>135</sup>

While this renewed mobilization was potentially positive for Buddhist militants as South Vietnamese cast their votes, the message articulated was less a support for any particular candidate than an opposition to the military. Indeed, the civilian tickets of Trường Đình Dzu,

<sup>127</sup> “Tại Đại Hội Phật Tử Liên Hữu Thế Giới, Phật Giáo VN Chặn Họng Nga Sô,” *Chính Luận*, Nov. 17, 1966.

<sup>128</sup> “Linh mục Hạt Trưởng Hồ Nai v/v Quốc Hội gạt bỏ Đấng Tối Cao lời mở đầu của bản Hiến Pháp,” dated 3/28/1967; CV 493/BH/NA/CT/1M dated 5/4/1967; CV 128-CDCG/LTMT dated 3/27/1967, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29867.

<sup>129</sup> “Viet Buddhists Renew Their Struggle, Threaten Action in Assailing Thieu,” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 15, 1967.

<sup>130</sup> “Saigon, Allies Propose New Truce,” *Boston Globe*, Apr. 8, 1967.

<sup>131</sup> “TT Châu minh xác và bày tỏ nỗi lòng về việc xây cất VNQT,” *Chánh Đạo*, Mar. 7, 1967.

<sup>132</sup> “Thieu Fails to show at a Campaign Rally,” *The Washington Post*, Aug. 25, 1967

<sup>133</sup> “Thượng Tọa Thiện hoa và Hội Đồng VHK ngạc nhiên về sự xuất hiện của bản Hiến Chương mới,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 3, 1967; “Việc ban hành Hiến Chương mới của PG Đại Đức Hộ Giác Tuyên bố: ‘cá nhân tôi hoàn toàn chống đối và sẽ gọi thơ ngỏ cho Trugn Tướng Thiệu,’” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 6, 1967

<sup>134</sup> “Họp báo tại chùa Ân Quang sáng ngày 14-8-1967 Ủy Ban Bảo Vệ Hiến Chương PG đã thành lập từ Trung Ương đến Quận Xã,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 16, 1967.

<sup>135</sup> “TT Tâm Châu báo tin lưu lại chức vị Viện Trưởng VHK tới đa 5 ngày,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 12, 1967; “Thư ngỏ của TT Tâm Châu,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 17, 1967; “Vì sao cụ Mai Thọ Truyền cho rằng Thượng Tọa Tâm Châu chôn vùi Phật Giáo Việt Nam xuống vũng bùn?” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 22, 1967; “Đại Đức Liễu Minh Nhận Định là TT Tâm Châu đáng trách nhưng chức đáng trách bằng kẻ chủ mưu làm cho TT thành người đáng trách,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 22, 1967.



Trần Văn Hương and Phan Khắc Sửu all opposed the administration's attempt to institute a new Charter.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, these candidates all presented similar proposals for negotiations and peace thus further dividing what could have been a Buddhist voting bloc. Indeed, answering a news conference, Thích Thiện Minh—a leader within the militant wing—stated that “the Church only supports good policies and not any specific individual.”<sup>137</sup> To make matters worse, certain measures were taken by the administration to ensure that Buddhist militancy was neutralized. Two key candidates who could have potentially mobilized Buddhist votes—Âu Trường Thanh and Dương Văn Minh—were both excluded from the running. And in the senatorial race, slates affiliated to Thích Trí Quang were disqualified by the Central Election Council.<sup>138</sup> Following the military-ticket's victory in the Presidential elections, Thích Trí Quang and his supporters continued their opposition to the new Charter while simultaneously condemning the election results as fraudulent. However, the mobilization was quickly stifled as the newly elected National Assembly ratified the election results and military troops surrounded the Ân Quang Pagoda in preparation for possible insurrection. Law 23/67 was upheld by the newly elected Thiệu Presidency establishing Thích Tâm Châu as the legally recognized representative of Vietnamese Buddhists. By the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, the Ân Quang faction were reportedly seeking to resolve the matter through the courts.<sup>139</sup>

While conservative voices—particularly politically-minded Catholics—were organizing electorally, the Buddhist Church was factionalized by ongoing divisions. The lack of political coherence in the Church following the Buddhist defeat in the summer of 1966 had lasting repercussions for Buddhist political capability during the subsequent elections. It must be remembered that the Buddhists had once nearly single-handedly toppled the administration of Trần Văn Hương and had military supporters who engaged in literal battles against Kỳ's loyalist marines on the streets of Đà Nẵng. However, despite this political potential, the rupture in the Church between Thích Tâm Châu and Thích Trí Quang prevented the Buddhists from capitalizing on their mobilizing capabilities during the crucial elections. This paved the way for more conservative voices to seize political dominance over key institutions of State. While a resurgence in Buddhist militancy would be seen in the National Assembly elections of 1971, the immediate period after the formation of the Second Republic saw a consolidation of conservative

<sup>136</sup> “Trong cuộc họp báo ngày 19-8 tại nhà hàng Quốc Tế, tới phiên Ô. Sửu nói tới Hiến Chương PG,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 22, 1967; “Họp báo của Liên Danh Hương-Truyền, Ô. Hương sẽ rút lui nếu còn bị áp lực đe dọa,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 17, 1967; “Cụ Phan Khắc Sửu gửi văn thư yêu cầu TT Thiệu hủy Bỏ Việc ban hành hiến chương mới của Giáo Hội PGVN Thống Nhất,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 9, 1967; “3 búa chót nhắm vào liên danh Chánh quyền,” *Chánh Đạo*, Sep. 3, 1967.

<sup>137</sup> “Thượng Tọa Thích Thiện Minh nói rõ về buổi com thân mật với bảy Liên Danh ứng cử Tổng Thống,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 26, 1967.

<sup>138</sup> Penniman, 93.

<sup>139</sup> “Army Purge in Saigon as Buddhists Stir,” *Boston Globe*, Sep. 17, 1967; “Tri Quang fails to get recognition,” *Boston Globe*, Sep. 29, 1967; “Thieu rejects militant Buddhist monk's demands,” *New York Times*, Sep. 29, 1967; “Vietnam: Buddhists march in Protest,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 1, 1967; “Anti-government Protests ebb in South Vietnam,” *New York Times*, Oct. 4, 1967; “Buddhist End 13-Day Protest against Thieu,” *Los Angeles Times*, Oct. 11, 1967; “Thieu pledges wider war if search for peace fails,” *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1967; “Police in Saigon Crush a Protest,” *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1967; “Hanoi Says US Loses 5 Jets in Step-up of Raids,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 29, 1967; “Buddhists of South Vietnam Shun Revolt,” *Los Angeles Times*, Aug. 21, 1968; Đoàn Thêm, *Việc Từng Ngày 1967*, 257.

voices which prioritized mobilizing for the anticommunist war over the concerns regarding democracy or peace negotiations.

Indeed, the period that followed the 1967 Presidential elections would be marked with intensified attempts by the state to consolidate political authority as well as monopolize the ideological discourse. The Tết Offensive—coming just three months after the inauguration of the Thiệu Presidency—would further reinforce these trends as the catastrophe of war reached urban centers. While the Tết Offensive would initiate the long-desired talks between the Washington, Saigon, and Hà Nội, it also initiated a non-exempt draft policy pulling once deferred students and faculty into the military. Pacification, psychological warfare, and indoctrination programs would be expanded, revamped, and escalated while the South Vietnamese state initiated its “General Information” program which strictly monitored, manipulated, and directed the news reporting and political education within the country. The content and direction of political education during the Second Republic would be greatly influenced by who won the elections in 1967. Indeed, political discussions would be increasingly regulated and controlled by the Republican state. “Democracy”—the narrative that had inspired so much of civil mobilization—would be recrafted in accordance with the perspective of the military and diminishing the anti-government mobilization that had marked the Interregnum. The old interpretations of anti-neutralism, the Geneva Accords, and even Personalism would find new life as political study sessions were utilized to mobilize support for the anticommunist war and reframe the departure of American troops and “Vietnamization.” Below, this chapter reviews the discursive developments of the Interregnum and contextualizes the fate of anticommunist narratives as South Vietnam enters the age of the Second Republic.

## THE FATE OF NARRATIVES

Sean Fear recently argued that Ngô Đình Diệm had left an “ambiguous legacy” upon South Vietnam.<sup>140</sup> While Fear focuses on how Diệm was remembered and the controversy surrounding his rule, the legacy of the Diệm administration after the collapse of the First Republic cannot be reducible to the memory of a man. Diệm’s “authoritarianism” may have been the focal through which the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” was articulated, but the ideas and that emerged during the First Republic continue to shape and influence the politics of the country long after the assassination of Diệm. Chapter 2 of this dissertation had highlighted the three dominant and most comprehensive narratives that were crafted and disseminated through the PSP program of the First Republic: the South Vietnamese rejection of the 1954 Geneva Accords, Anti-neutralism, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment. As shown in previous chapters in Part II of this dissertation, these narratives continued to be influential political discourses that were mobilized, articulated, and utilized by diverse components in the Republican Civil Society to contest the legitimacy of different regimes that emerged during the period. However, indicative of the Interregnum years, the slack in state’s ideological control over the definitions and meanings of these narratives provided avenues for discursive development and change. Throughout this period, religious leaders, nationalist parties, students and journalists participated in an “interpretive contest” as South Vietnam negotiated familiar and established

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<sup>140</sup> Sean Fear, “The Ambiguous Legacy of Ngô Đình Diệm in South Vietnam’s Second Republic (1967-1975),” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, 11(1):2016, 1-75.

understandings of the anticommunist war with new demands for civil rule, democratic institutions, and representation.

By 1967, certain elements within these dominant narratives greatly differed from what was articulated in 1963. Most evident is the definition and implementation of “peace.” Debated largely through the question of how to end the war, the Presidential elections in 1967 highlighted differing peace proposals ranging from a more conservative position of establishing peace through military victory to more radical positions calling for the retreat of all foreign troops from Vietnam. Anti-neutralism, as it was in 1964, was a mobilizing force against the overtures of French President Charles De Gaulle who advocated granting South Vietnam “neutral” status in the Cold War. Pushing for talks between Washington and Moscow to resolve the conflict in Vietnam, De Gaulle was demonized through protests, demonstrations, arson and effigies which manifested to epic proportions during the first Day of National Resentment in July of 1964. The issue of neutralism was further mobilized during the administration of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ to criticize the government for its “laggard” response to France’s diplomatic recognition of the People’s Republic of China—a laggardness which played no small part in justifying the coup led by Nguyễn Khánh at the end of January. Anti-neutralism again resurfaced during the administration of Phan Huy Quát due to the inconsistent manner in which the state dealt with the various “peace movements” that emerged during the period. Pushed predominantly by conservative voices in the Republican civil society, anti-neutralism once again became a point of political justification for toppling the Quát regime. Through these moments of mobilization—a reutilization and repurposing of narrative—anti-neutralism largely moved away from a domestic emphasis on “resoluteness” and rather emphasized how South Vietnam should respond to peace proposals and overtures for negotiations. Conjoined with the issue of South Vietnamese self-determination, anti-neutralism was a means through which South Vietnam articulated not only its refusal to bow to communist pressures, but also as a way for South Vietnam to set its own terms for peace and place the South Vietnamese future not in the determinations of foreign powers but rather in South Vietnamese hands.

Yet, coupled with the destructive realities of war, the stagnation of democratic reforms, and the growing American presence in South Vietnam, the issue of “peace”—which was once decried as the new slogan for neutralism by the South Vietnamese journalist Từ Chung<sup>141</sup>—had greatly shifted in meaning during the final year of the Interregnum. Undoubtedly, this shift in how “peace” can be legitimately (and legally) discussed was in large part a result of Buddhist-led mobilization. Indeed, the position of Phan Khắc Sửu during the Presidential race reflected the proposal of Thích Quảng Liên in early 1965. Moreover, the call for negotiations and end to the war was a crucial dimension of Buddhist demands during the upheavals in spring and summer of 1966. The push for the retreat of foreign troops (including that of the Americans) was no longer exclusively seen as some “neutralist” scheme to pave the path for communism. Rather, it was a legitimate and recognized platform backed by at the very least the civilian slate of Trường Đình Dzu.<sup>142</sup> Other civilian candidates called for more moderate conditions for peace, but, in large part, presented themselves as oppositional to the military-led state.<sup>143</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Từ Chung, “Vấn Đề Vấn Hòa Hòa Bình,” *Chính Luận*, Mar. 9, 1965

<sup>142</sup> “Saigon Peace Candidate Sees ‘Duty’ to End War,” *New York Times*, Sep. 1, 1967.

<sup>143</sup> “10 Liên Dnah bơ vợ ở miền Trung trở về Saigon họp nhau sôi nổi tố cáo chánh quyền thiếu thiện chí,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 9, 1967

The Buddhist's position towards regimes in power throughout much of the Interregnum had been an oppositional one. The most consistent political aspect was their demand for democratic and civil rule. Throughout the Interregnum Years, that particular demand was embraced well outside of just Buddhist circles. The questions debated within the Republican civil society revolved around how that democracy would look, when it should come about, and who would enact it. Recall that "True Democracy and Freedom" was once interpreted by prominent newspapers as the best weapon against the communists in the war. The war—as argued—cannot be won through military might alone, but rather the social, economic, and political policies that can address endemic domestic issues so that South Vietnam may be stabilized and can successfully wage that war. The various civilian-supported proposals to end the war that emerged on the national scene in 1967 came about due to the widespread opposition to the military's control over the affairs of society. The military-led state's push to expand the war rather than seek negotiation was seen as a political position that pointed to continued political dominance of the military. Upon this, peace proposals were the fulcrum around which that opposition to the military was waged; "peace"—as it was during the 1967 Presidential campaign—was a political weapon against military rule.

The redefinition of what "neutralism" constituted in 1967, furthermore, paved the way for reassessment of the narrative on the Geneva Accords. Since the very first Day of National Resentment instituted by Nguyễn Khánh in 1964, July 20<sup>th</sup> marked an annual commemoration in South Vietnamese political life in which the state deployed the 1954 signing of the Geneva Accords as platform to denounce communist atrocities, push for a "Northward March," and articulate anti-neutralist rationales. The signing of the Geneva Accords was largely demonized as a betrayal by the French and the Communists against the Vietnamese people. As argued, South Vietnam did not sign the Accords but adhered to its stipulations; the communists, on the other hand, had signed the Accords but had violated them—a violation that pointed to the communist's culpability in initiating the detested war.

However, in 1967, one the most esteemed civilian Presidential candidates, Phan Khắc Sữ (the former Head of State and the elected Chairman of the Constituent Assembly) pushed for a peace proposal "on the basis of the Geneva Accords." One of the more radical propositions, Sữ's proposal dictated that those who choose communism will go to the north and those who "choose Freedom" will remain in the South. Each side of the partition would be held by international guarantee to not engage in conflict and, for a period of "10 or 20 years," each side would "compete with each other to build the country, and after that they will in accordance to circumstances come together to talk about the unification of the nation."<sup>144</sup> Although acknowledging the "necessity" of American troops in South Vietnam, Sữ argued that Americans are like a "double-edged blade" used a doctor because while Americans were positive for some issues in South Vietnam, they cannot "cure all of the disease." To combat communism, what was necessary was having a "more delicate civilian organization"—an implicit snide at the iron-fisted policies of Nguyễn Cao Kỳ. While Sữ's proposal problematized the long-standing opposition to the Geneva Accords in South Vietnamese anticommunist discourse, Sữ, nevertheless, drew on distinct elements of the narrative to make his case. Indeed, part of his proposal entailed negotiations with the enemy. However, he rejected negotiations with the

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<sup>144</sup> Indeed, although modeled on the 1954 Geneva Accords, the proposal by Sữ did not envision unification in the near future.

National Liberation Front (the communist guerrilla movement in the South) decrying such an organization as “a tool of the communists in the North”—a position that reflected the dominant anticommunist discourse.<sup>145</sup>

The position of Trần Văn Hương (the former Premier from Nov. 1964-Jan. 1965), too, pushed for peace and negotiations. More closely aligned with the traditional view of the Geneva Accords, Hương blamed the “egregious error” of the Geneva Accords on France and was a burden that “our people must carry” up to this day. Negotiations, for Hương, cannot be a replica of the 1954 signings, but rather the main parties in those negotiations must be two sides who were directly involved in the war—North and South Vietnam. For Hương, this was to protect the political autonomy of the Vietnamese and the Vietnamese people’s ability to determine their own future. The influx of foreign troops (American included) had highlighted the progressive transition of the war away from the South Vietnamese hands and into the hands of their allies. According to Hương, although Americans believe that they are “protecting freedom for Vietnam,” the reality was that American policy was “solely oriented towards safeguarding Southeast Asia which in large part is determined in [what happens in] Vietnam.” For the former South Vietnamese Premier, while American presence was necessary, the resolution of the conflict must be by the Vietnamese people themselves. Like Sừ, he argued that each side of the partition should develop their own societies “so that each can be prosperous and later, if the circumstances allow, sit together to resolve the issue of unification.”<sup>146</sup>

The positions of Phan Khắc Sừ and Trần Văn Hương (the two most notable civilian candidates in the Presidential race) demonstrates the ways in which South Vietnam was negotiating with seemingly contradictory narratives and ideals. The various resolutions adopted by candidates entailed commitments to anticommunist nationalism, while simultaneously pushing for peace and negotiations. Candidates, for one, drew on preexisting ideas and concepts that can be dated the First Republic. They, for another, stood in adamant opposition to military rule and prioritized social, economic, and political developments of the South Vietnamese nation over the escalation and expansion of the war. Reflecting broader angst to American presence in Vietnam and the growing concerns over South Vietnamese political autonomy, these candidates further indicated that the resolution of the war must be for the Vietnamese and by the Vietnamese. Trường Đình Dzu—the most vocal critic of military rule and came second in the Presidential race with 17% of the popular vote—pushed for a South Vietnamese position of peace arguing that as nationalists, the South Vietnamese should not avoid the issue of peace and allow “only the communists to talk about peace and opposition.” Like other candidates, Dzu avowed himself to the anticommunist nationalist cause, critiqued American presence, though he advocated for discussions with the NLF on the basis that they are seen as a domestic rebel group rather than a legitimate party in the war.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>145</sup> “2 Liên Danh Sừ-Đán, Hương-Truyền ‘xuất quân’ ra mắt báo chí thủ đô,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 5, 1967; “11 liên danh tiếp xúc cử tri tại Biên Hòa, vắng mặt 2 tướng Thiệu-Kỳ, có ông Võ Văn Cửu đại diện,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 18, 1967; “Bầu cử Tổng Thống và Phó Tổng Thống Liên Danh ‘trâu cày,’” *Chánh Đạo*, Sep. 2, 1967

<sup>146</sup> “2 Liên Danh Sừ-Đán, Hương-Truyền ‘xuất quân’ ra mắt báo chí thủ đô,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 5, 1967; “11 liên danh tiếp xúc cử tri tại Biên Hòa, vắng mặt 2 tướng Thiệu-Kỳ, có ông Võ Văn Cửu đại diện,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 18, 1967.

<sup>147</sup> “Ứng cử viên Trường Đình Dzu ‘tả xông hữu đệt’ suốt 2 giờ trong cuộc đấu võ mồm với báo chí,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 8, 1967.

The redefinition of “neutrality”—and fundamentally what it meant to be a “nationalist” or “anticommunist”—eventually influenced the military-led state itself. As was presented in the beginning of this chapter, the issue of “democracy” had entered into the study materials of the “Discussion Movement”—the revived form of the PSP. Although the military-state clearly redefined what “democracy” would ultimately look like and how it would be implemented, civil society nevertheless had transformed the democratic promise of the November Revolution into a prioritized issue that was unavoidable for the South Vietnamese state. Moreover, following the Honolulu Conference, not only did the South Vietnamese begin prioritizing domestic issues in the anticommunist war—a prioritization long pushed by the Republican civil society—American foreign policy as well had turned towards resolving the “social injustices” that plagued South Vietnam. Mobilization by vast sections of the Republican civil society had undoubtedly made their mark on the ideological and political position of the military-led state. During the Presidential elections, voices from civil society, once again, shaped the position held by the military-backed ticket. Indeed, faced with the popularity of the various peace proposals, Thiệu on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August announced that discussion over “negotiations is not traitorous”—a direct reversal to how “peace” was conceptualized by the South Vietnamese state as recent as May of 1965 and by the end of August, Thiệu was promising negotiations with the enemy as well as a pause in aerial bombardment of the North if elected President.

The continuing salience of narratives and ideas from the First Republic despite the demonization of the Diệm helps explain how it is that the Citizen’s Front of Religion led by Fr. Hoàng Quỳnh can reify the specter of “Feudalism, Colonialism, and Communism” *phong, thực, cộng* and decry the Geneva Accords as “evidence of Communist betrayal of the people” in 1966, while simultaneously condemn Diệm for “implementing a petty policy that serves solely the Ngô family, exterminate and terrorize religions in the South as well as nationalist parties.”<sup>148</sup> As Part II had demonstrated, the anticommunist narratives of anti-neutrality and the rejection of the Geneva Accords were modularly utilized by diverse social groupings for a host of political objectives, though often in opposition to the “authoritarianism” of the past and in opposition to the various regimes that came to power. Thus, the new narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” was integrated alongside the older narratives derived from the First Republic. Throughout the Interregnum, it was enough to simply be anticommunist or anti-neutralist; leaders must also be anti-authoritarian and—by 1967—in search of “peace” for Vietnam. Integrating “True Democracy and Freedom” allowed for a diverse utilization of “old” narratives and ultimately allowed these narratives to change and be politically molded to fit specific agendas. However, in utilizing and changing these anticommunist narratives, the Republican society also served to perpetuate these ideals and ensure their continued salience in South Vietnamese political life. Indeed, for many 1967 candidates, “peace” platforms often entailed reutilization of ideological tenets associated with the narratives anti-neutrality and the Geneva Accords.

While the narrative of Vietnamese Underdevelopment was not mobilized in the same way as anti-neutrality or that of the Geneva Accords, self-determination and the desire for economic, social, and political modernization to combat communist domination were very much apparent. The “New Life Hamlet” introduced following the Honolulu Conference, after all, was modeled

<sup>148</sup> “Thông cáo của Mặt Trận công dân các tôn giáo và đoàn thể chính trị,” dated 8/18/1966, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966*, PTTVNCH 29689.

on the Strategic Hamlet concept of the First Republic. Study materials on the program distributed in early 1967 emphasized the “development of a new spirit” as a key element of the state’s new Hamlet program. Alongside state support of rural economic production and the introduction of new technology, the New Life Hamlet would also seek to reform peasant’s “moral spirit”  *tinh thần đạo đức* by excising social ills such as superstition, gambling, alcoholism, and prostitution as well as raising the political aptitude of the rural population through political, cultural, linguistic, and history classes to build a “spirit of the people”  *tinh thần dân tộc*. These initiatives were, on the one hand, intended to raise the living standards in the countryside and, on the other hand, combat communism. Like the Strategic Hamlet that came before, the New Life Hamlet was enacted to address the “underdevelopment” of South Vietnam—one brought about by the history of colonialism and feudalism and the continuing threat of communism.<sup>149</sup>

Throughout the Interregnum, South Vietnamese perspectives on their own “underdevelopment” had hardly changed from the First Republic. A lengthy 1965 expose written by Thế Uyên in  *Chính Luận* highlights the consistency of the “Vietnamese Underdevelopment” narrative in South Vietnamese political discourse on the anticommunist war. Turned into a book in 1968, the piece “Chiến Tranh Cách Mạng” (Revolutionary War) sought to articulate the rationale and strategy of communist-directed “guerrilla” or “revolutionary war” and its significance in Vietnam. Drawing from a host of materials including Western military theorists like Clausewitz and JFC Fuller as well as Mao Zedong—the progenitor of the “people’s war” strategy in the Chinese Revolution—and Võ Nguyên Giáp—the military general who defeated the French at Điện Biên Phủ—the piece situates “revolutionary war” within a grandiose communist strategy to monopolize global power and one that will be unrelenting “as long as there is still one piece of land on the globe that is not yet dyed red.” While much of the work is devoted to detailing the nature of “revolutionary war,” Thế Uyên argues that the prevalence of communist revolutionary war strategy was a result of the underdevelopment plaguing African, Asian, and South American countries.

For the author, revolutionary war is implemented in “underdeveloped countries or those that only recently escaped the yoke of colonialism of white people by exploiting the contradictions and defects in these countries to isolate key capitalist countries.” These contradictions utilized by communists were legacies of not only white colonialism, but also the historical “feudalism” which created class divisions within the societies of post-colonial countries. The plight of these countries is further exacerbated by internal divisions between the impoverished countryside and wealthy cities, the prominence of regionalism, eruption of religious conflicts, the fact that governments often lacked political legitimacy, and the continuous competition for national power between political organizations. Externally, underdeveloped countries face border disputes as result of the ambition to quickly develop, many had conflicting diplomatic positions within the Cold War, and those who rule the country are often manipulated by foreign powers. These endemic problems make communist strategy of infiltration, popular mobilization, and political warfare ideal. Utilizing the grievances associated with underdevelopment, communists mobilize an undereducated and impoverished population to

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<sup>149</sup> “ĐƯỜNG LỐI XÂY DỰNG NÔNG THÔN TRONG NĂM 1967,” attached to CV 034/HĐHDTL/VPĐH dated 3/29/1967,  *Báo cáo học tập tại Nha Quảng Trị Nhân viên về đường lối xây dựng nông thôn trong năm 1967*, PTTVNCH 29737.

acquire support for guerrilla war, destabilizing the government in underdeveloped countries and seek eventual state seizure.<sup>150</sup>

The South Vietnamese demand for “True Democracy and Freedom” was conceptualized within the context of these perceived challenges of underdevelopment and the relationship between underdevelopment and communist guerilla war. Rather than the Personalism of the First Republic, however, the solution proposed in 1967 was to resolve these endemic challenges by focusing on the social, economic, and political aspects of the anticommunist war rather than just the military aspects. Doing so would stifle the ability of communists to mobilize popular support and ultimately wage guerrilla war.<sup>151</sup> For the most part, the candidates for the 1967 presidential elections and the slates for the National Assembly pushed for economic programs which emphasized technologicalization, increased rural production, and stabilizing the South Vietnamese economy. For example, Dr. Hoàng Cơ Bình—who too was running for presidency—promised to invest in Vietnamese agricultural production, eliminate the prevalence of the black market, and stabilize exchange rates.<sup>152</sup> The Greater National Unity slate in the senatorial race pushed for eventual “economic self-governance and independence.”<sup>153</sup> Some candidates, like Trương Đình Dzu saw the need to increase the political aptitude of the South Vietnamese society. His campaign pushed for the political development and political education of all factions in society—the military and religions included—in accordance to “the Nationalist direction” so that each group can properly participate and be formally represented in the affairs of the country.<sup>154</sup>

Although Personalism would never formally re-enter the political study sessions of the South Vietnamese state, elements once emphasized under the Diemist Personalism such as “self-determination,” the importance of spiritual and psychological change, and the unique path that Vietnam must take for modernization would make their way into the study sessions of the Second Republic. Personalism, furthermore, would eventually make a comeback due to the political rise of Catholicism. The Nhân-Xã Party—a revival of the Cần Lao Party formed in 1968—not only glorified Ngô Đình Diệm, but also propagated Personalist ideals.<sup>155</sup> Works such as *Nhận Định* (Appraisal) by Nguyễn Văn Trung in 1969 re-invoked Personalism and tied it to matters of society, education, development, and politics. However, rather than a particular agenda of modernization uniquely catered to the conditions of Vietnam, the Personalism depicted by Nguyễn Văn Trung was a moral platform towards a “form of progress that respects personhood” and values the spiritual dimensions of human beings.<sup>156</sup> And as the war dragged on,

<sup>150</sup> Thế Uyên, “Chiến Tranh Cách Mạng,” *Chính Luận*, June 12-Aug. 12, 1965

<sup>151</sup> Thế Uyên quotes Alexander Papagos who had written on the guerrilla war in Greece to make this argument. According to Papagos, “I do not argue that only violence will resolve the issues of society. Rather, the ultimate responsibility of a legitimate government is to find munificent and just resolution to these problems.... To eliminate communist propaganda, one must simultaneous educate the population and utilize psychological warfare. Every citizen within a democratic country must comprehend the communist scheme” (Thế Uyên, “Chiến Tranh Cách Mạng,” *Chính Luận*, Aug. 12, 1965).

<sup>152</sup> “Sơ lược diễn từ do Bắc Sĩ Hoàng Cơ Bình ứng cử viên Tổng Thống,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 18, 1967.

<sup>153</sup> “Liên Danh 2 Đại Đônà Kết Quốc Gia,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 13, 1967.

<sup>154</sup> “Ứng cử viên Trương Đình Dzu ‘tả xông hữu đột’ suốt 2 giờ trong cuộc đấu võ mồm với báo chí,” *Chánh Đạo*, Aug. 8, 1967.

<sup>155</sup> Sean Fear, “The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic: Domestic Politics and Civil Society in US-South Vietnamese Relations, 1967-1971,” Diss. Cornell University (2016), 19-58

<sup>156</sup> Nguyễn Văn Trung, *Nhận Định IV: Chiến Tranh, Cách Mạng, Hòa Bình*, Nam Sơn Xuất Bản (Saigon: 1969).



the Catholic-left would emerge on the political scene in an attempt to retrieve Personalism from the authoritarianism of the First Republic while simultaneously critiquing American materialism and its deleterious impact on South Vietnamese culture and society.<sup>157</sup>

Furthermore, the growth of Catholic prominence on the political stage opened the way for the first public gathering to commemorate Diệm's death in November of 1969. In that same year, Trần Kim Tuyền—under the penname Lương Khải Minh—and Cao Thế Dung—an instructor rural sciences—began publishing the series *How to Kill a President* (*Làm Thế Nào Để Giết Một Tổng Thống*) in the Catholic newspaper *Hòa Bình* which re-depicted Diệm in a highly favorable light.<sup>158</sup> Turned into a book in 1971, the political substance of the work was further reinforced with the release of the Pentagon Papers in the same year which highlighted the American role in the assassination of Ngô Đình Diệm and Ngô Đình Nhu. As American presence in South Vietnam continued to be contested and the issue of South Vietnamese political autonomy lingered, the release of the Pentagon Papers would take South Vietnam by storm and contributed in reinforcing an image of Diệm as the symbol of anticommunist self-determination in South Vietnamese—and eventually Vietnamese American—memory.

#### CONCLUSION:

The Interregnum was a period of marked change and transformation. Not only did new political ideas and narratives emerge, but these ideas were also widely championed by emerging civil societal groups. Mobilization through the rhetoric of “True Democracy and Freedom” allowed new ideas to become widespread and prominent. However, within that change, there was also great discursive continuity. Despite the collapse of the First Republic, Republican anticommunist narratives originating from the Diệm administration continue to shape and influence how South Vietnamese understood the war, interpret developments in their country, and shaped their sense of nationhood. “Old” ideas existed simultaneously with the “new,” and, because of the diverse utilization of these narratives, old ideas became changed and modified to contemporaneous political concerns and imperatives.

However, the victory of the military, Catholics, and more conservative voices in the 1967 elections laid the groundwork for revisions of the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom” which had a profound impact on the political contours and mobilization of the Interregnum Years. The re-establishment of key vehicles for state control over discourse such as the PSP would be consequential for the remainder of the Republican era. And indeed, with the inauguration of the Second Republic, the new Thiệu presidency took measures to revamp the war effort and squash political opposition to his rule. The consolidation of power by advocates to expand the war rather than to end it through negotiations pointed to not only the political direction that the Second Republic would take. This consolidation of power also meant new efforts to re-narrate the recent past in a way that would be beneficial to those who won. This, of

<sup>157</sup> Tuấn Hoàng, “Ideology in Urban South Vietnam, 1950-1975,” Diss. University of Norte Dame (2013), 466-497.

<sup>158</sup> See PTTĐICH 1582, *Tài liệu sưu tầm của Nha Nghi Lễ năm 1968 v/v Tổng Thống Ngô Đình Diệm Viếng Thăm Hoa Kỳ từ ngày 05-23/5.1957*. THE FOLDER HOLDS THE ORIGINAL COPIES OF *LÀM THẾ NÀO ĐỂ GIẾT MỘT TỔNG THỐNG*, WHICH CAME OUT AS A BOOK IN 1971 ON THE DEATH OF NGO DINH DIEM. THIS BOOK IS WIDELY AVAILABLE, THOUGH WITH EDITS. *HÒA BÌNH*, THE NEWS OUTLET PUBLISHED THE PIECE IN SERIES FROM No. 16, 1969-Jul. 19, 1971. The piece was written by Lương Khải Minh (Trần Kim Tuyền) and Cao Vị Hoàng (Cao Thế Dũng). 1970 articles in *Hòa Bình*, see PTTĐIICH 4935, *Bài nói chuyện báo cất các báo về cái chết của Tổng Thống Ngô Đình Diệm năm 1970-1971*.

course, is not a new phenomenon. After all, “Discussion Movement” during the two-year rule of the Directorate had sought to redefine “democracy,” had demonized the mobilization of Buddhists and oppositional voices and transferred “revolutionary” legitimacy from that of the Republican civil society to that of the South Vietnamese military.

When we look at the political discourse in Vietnamese America today, the result of the 1967 elections had greatly shaped how the Interregnum would be remembered. Lâm Vĩnh Thế’s 2010 book—a work that this project had drawn greatly upon—cast the years from 1963-1967 as the “Years of Political Chaos.”<sup>159</sup> Contemporary collective memory depicts this time period as one that was disastrous for the anticommunist cause and ultimately contributed to the Fall of Saigon in 1975, marking the exodus of anticommunist South Vietnamese on the shores of the nations of the West.<sup>160</sup> It was a period without state guidance, without cause, without a war effort; it was a period of calamity and turbulence which, in great part, was attributed to the Vietnamese Buddhists who were alleged of communist sympathies.<sup>161</sup> But Vietnamese Americans are not alone. Mark Moyar, as had been demonstrated, had no sympathies for the “maniac” Thích Trí Quang and largely placed blame for the “chaos” of the period upon the monk himself. Moreover, for Moyar, the ascension of Thiệu and Kỳ was equated with that of the emperor Đinh Bộ Lĩnh who unified the country in the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD, arguing that military rule had “infused the civil administration with energy and acted decisively to fix problems that had long needed attention.”<sup>162</sup> Prioritizing the role of the military in “stabilizing” the country, this period is depicted through lenses reflective of a narrative crafted, disseminated, and utilized by the military generals who sought to legitimize themselves and maintain power over the South Vietnamese state.

The chapters in Part III, furthermore, point to the ability of ideas to survive long after the regime that created them had collapsed. These ideas survived—though imperfectly—through the reutilization, appropriation, and modifications by different social actors. On the one hand, these social actors allowed ideas from the First Republic to hold continued salience in political discussions. On the other hand, the way former ideas would be defined and the significance that they would hold were largely a consequence of the political battles and debates that raged between competing groups over that “torch of righteousness.” Moreover, Part II had taken a

<sup>159</sup> The same terminologies were utilized to describe the two years prior to the ascension of Thiệu and Kỳ in Nguyễn Kỳ Phong, *Từ Điển Chiến Tranh Việt Nam*, (Nhà Sách Tự Lực: 2009), 309.

<sup>160</sup> Minh Võ in a 2003 book that proclaims to present the various opinions on Ngô Đình Diệm and combat the idea that Diệm was “corrupt and oppressive,” describes the Interregnum as a period in which “all of his opponents (Duong Van Minh, Nguyen Khanh, Tran Van Huong, Phan Khac Suu, Phan Huy Quat...) tried their chances but they all failed, and had to quit, one after the other after a few months in power.” As for Thieu and Ky, “the situation in South Vietnam was somewhat better thanks to a growing intervention of US battle-forces. They were, however, unable to prove themselves equal to president Diem” (185) The collapse of the First Republic and the chaos that ensued highlighted the mistake of American foreign policy in supporting the 1963 coup. Accordingly, “in many nationalists’ mind, if the US had not manipulated some disloyal generals to overthrow Diem...and only provided him with weapons, technologies and money, leaving Vietnam [to] fight its own way, and especially if the US had agreed to Diem’s negotiations with Hanoi and helped him have the upper hand, it would have certainly saved thousands of millions of dollars and more than 58,000 American lives, and had not suffered a deep humiliating defeat by an army of rubber-sandalled or barefooted soldiers” (189) (Minh Võ, *Ngô Đình Diệm, Praise and Blame*, [Thong Vu, 2009]).

<sup>161</sup> “There were many Buddhist organizations closely affiliated with the NLF and were regularly utilized as organs of communication” by the communists “Về Phật Giáo Việt Nam và Hai Giáo Hội,” *BBC Tiếng Việt*, Sept. 9, 2013.

<sup>162</sup> P. 403.

lengthy path to dissect the process that made 1967 so “contingent.”<sup>163</sup> This process highlights the “interpretive contests” that had emerged since the collapse of the First Republic over the definition of “revolution” and “True Democracy and Freedom.” From these contests, diverse groups consolidated into political blocs with contrasting ideals and priorities for the future of South Vietnam. The early contests, furthermore, laid the political groundwork for the prominence of not only voices for “peace” and negotiations, but also the voices for expanded war and the heightening of efforts for the anticommunist cause. Indeed, the “contingency” that marked the 1967 Presidential election would be impossible without a host of significant events that were marked by conflicts between societal groups and between civil society and the state over meanings, definitions, and political priorities. These events, too, were “contingent.” Khánh could have used the military to crush the student and Buddhist mobilization back in August of 1964; Hương could have chosen to immediately reform his cabinet in November; and Phan Huy Quát could have labeled the “peace” movement of Thích Quảng Liên as “neutralist.” All these possibilities could have charted South Vietnam onto very different paths in which civil rule could have been prolonged or Khánh could have remained in power or that civil society—and ultimately the narrative of “True Democracy and Freedom”—would have never reached the political significance that it did.

The “chaos” of the Interregnum signifies that the Republican Era could have been a very different time period and South Vietnam could have been a very different country. One of the key possibilities signified is that anticommunism needed not be defined as something that solely meant the “extermination” of communists through expanded war, but rather an ideal that emphasized the economic development, democratic reform, and social transformation of the South Vietnamese nation. The historical impact of this period is profound—particularly in the way that those Interregnum Years concluded. As we look at the politics of Vietnamese America today, the prominence of military men as the legitimate articulator of anticommunist thought and ideals marks the consolidation of the “war” definition of anticommunism. If the Interregnum was to mean anything, it is to how this definition of anticommunism was not an inevitable outcome and that there were alternative possibilities for what Vietnamese anticommunism could have stood for.

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<sup>163</sup> “Looking back, the 1967 election stands out as a moment of contingency, a point from which a different future path appeared possible, had critical political choices gone the other way” (Sean Fear, “A Turning Point for South Vietnam,” *New York Times*, Sep. 1, 2017).

PART IV:

THE PAST IS NEVER DEAD

CHAPTER 10: RECONSTITUTING REPUBLICAN ANTICOMMUNISM

And on this last attempt which was their 6<sup>th</sup>, they were finally fortunate enough to escape the fangs of the Việt Cộng to arrive at the shore of Freedom. Drawing from their experiences from previous failed attempts, this time, they prepared fishing nets, faked a fishing expedition, but had to proceed in the dead of night. At communist police stations on the way, they had to keep women and children underneath the deck of the boat and had to cover the mouths of children to prevent them from coughing or crying to avoid the suspecting eyes of the communist police. For some 7 to 8 days, although they had to paddle against the waves and winds of the vast ocean, the adults endured starvation and thirst to save rice and water for the children because, in fear of the communist police, they dared not bring with them many provisions. Floating on the vast ocean, placing their fate upon the winds and waves of the endless ocean. All they had was their belief, a firm belief in the protection of Omnipotent and a hope; a hope yearning for a life of freedom and warmth under the safeguard of the Republican government led by President Ngô. And it was because of this belief and their love for Freedom that they, the 17 freedom warriors—including the 84 year elder and the 1-year old child—had reached the land of Freedom. <sup>1</sup>

Apart from the reference to the Republican administration and Ngô Đình Diệm, this 1956 passage above could very well have been written in Vietnamese America today to narrate the journeys of Vietnamese “boat people” following the Fall of Saigon. One needs to look no further than Hàm Trần’s 2007 film *Journey From the Fall*. From hiding below a deck and fleeing in the dead of night to the broader themes of fear and desperation, the above passage appears to articulate a scene-by-scene narration of passengers’ experiences on the rickety fishing boat of Đại Nghĩa. The passage—excerpted from a text distributed through the PSP during the Communist Denunciation Campaign—highlights themes that are all too familiar in Vietnamese American politics. Those themes of freedom, flight, communist repression and sacrifice are the cornerstone of how Vietnamese Americans articulate rationale for—as one Vietnamese film reviewer puts it—“why are we here? Why were we forced to leave our homeland and chose some strange, faraway land to start our lives anew?”<sup>2</sup> In other words, it places the contemporary Vietnamese American experience within a historical narration of significance and meaning.

When the People's Army of Vietnam (North Vietnamese Army) began its final offensive in January of 1975, South Vietnamese society was in complete disarray. The last year of the Republic was marked by civil societal upsurge and regular protests against the Nguyễn Văn Thiệu administration. The political and economic turmoil introduced a new wave of governmental repression as newspapers were shut down, publishers arrested, and demonstrations squashed with police violence.<sup>3</sup> Just two weeks before North Vietnamese tanks rumbled through Phước Long Province, protests erupted against the trial of publishers seized in recent arrests.<sup>4</sup> As cities in Central Vietnam began falling to the North Vietnamese forces, Thiệu’s political

<sup>1</sup> “Đồng Bào Bắc Việt Vẫn Tiếp Tục Thoát Ly Vùng Việt Cộng, Vào Nam Tìm Tự Do,” undated (1956), folder 52, PTUDCTN, TTLTQG2.

<sup>2</sup> Thanh Nguyên, “Sáu Năm Cho Một Cuốn Phim Vượt Sống – Journey from the Fall (Kỳ 2)” [Six Years for a Film Journey from the Fall (Series 2)], *Người Việt*, March 20, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> “All guns, no butter make Saigon desperate town,” *The Sun*, May 8, 1974; “Aid Campaign reveals Saigon’s Weakness,” *The Sun*, May 6, 1974; “Thieu claims US renegeing on aid pledge,” *Boston Globe*, Jun 7, 1974; “Vietnam fighting threatens Accord,” *The Irish Times*, Aug. 3, 1974; “To Saigon, All Dissenters Are Foes, All Foe are Reds,” *New York Times*, Aug. 20, 1974; “A Large Protest Erupts in Saigon,” *New York Times*, Sep 21, 1974; “Saigon Police, Foes of Regime Clash on Newspaper Seizures,” *The Washington Post*, Sep 22, 1974; “Vietnamese Legislators Ask Thieu’s Resignation,” *The Washington Post*, Nov 3, 1974; “Saigon restricts Distribution of Printed Material,” *New York Times*, Nov 7, 1974; “Thieu censorship backed in a test,” *New York Times*, Nov 15, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Protesters Hit Saigon Publishers’ Trial,” *The Washington Post*, Dec 27, 1974.

opposition began a hunger strike, the National Assembly burned photographs of the president, Buddhist nuns clashed with the police, and the Thieu regime expanded its crackdown on the press.<sup>5</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of April, Thieu stepped down from the Presidency blaming national woes on the insufficiency of American support and betrayal of commitments.<sup>6</sup> Trần Văn Hương took over the presidency for 5 days before Dương Văn Minh was sworn into office on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. Two days later, South Vietnam surrenders unconditionally to communist forces, ending the 20-year Vietnamese Republican rule.<sup>7</sup>

The fall of Saigon marked the beginning of a mass exodus of former Republican citizens to countries of the West, of which the United States took in the majority of the refugees. Summarily, one can divide the various waves of Vietnamese refugees into three distinct groups. The first were those who arrived in the immediate aftermath of the Republican state's collapse, entailing largely an urbanite, well-educated cohort who had deep ties to government or the American military and enterprises in South Vietnam. Encompassing some 150,000 individuals, many fled the country alongside the mass evacuation of remaining American servicemen aboard military airplanes, helicopters, naval ships, often in chaotic and desperate escape vividly captured in the photographs of Western journalists. The second were the "boat people," who often embarked on journeys aboard rickety fishing boats and makeshift vessels poorly designed for lengthy travels on the high seas. Many ventured East, seeking asylum in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Australia. Some sought refuge by traveling to the West to Thailand. A small number of refugees also made their trip by land routes through Laos and Cambodia, though these were perceived as more dangerous due to the communist states in these countries which had risen to power in tandem with the communist victory in Vietnam.<sup>8</sup> The third were those who were provided legally sanctioned migration per agreement between the United States and Vietnam. Initially meant for family and relatives of Vietnamese refugees already residing in the United States, the Orderly Departure Program (which eventually became the Humanitarian Operations Program) would also include Amerasians, former political prisoners, and those with ties to the former Republican state and the US government.<sup>9</sup>

The interval between the fall of Saigon and diplomatic normalization in 1995 marked a period of flight, migration, and resettlement during which the vast majority of the first-generation Vietnamese Americans arrived in the United States. As such, this period is crucially important and was the era of community formation in what is now Vietnamese America. As refugees, this generation of Vietnamese faced challenges similar to many other refugee groups which had fled their homeland to escape war, persecution, or other social or natural calamities. Many saw the loss of status, had few transferable occupational skills, faced underemployment and maladjustment, suffered post-traumatic stress, found themselves alone or separated from

<sup>5</sup> "Buddhists Protest against Thieu," *The Sun*, Jan 27, 1975; "Saigon police continue arrests of journalists," *Boston Globe*, Feb 5, 1975; "Closedown of Saigon Newspapers," *The Irish Times*, Feb 5, 1975; "Saigon Arrests put at 17 in a crackdown on press," *New York Times*, Feb 5, 1975; "49 Politicians Sign in Blood to Protest Thieu," *Los Angeles Times*, Feb 9, 1975; "Political Foes Bid Thieu Step Down," *New York Times*, Feb 11, 1975; "Saigon police scuffles with Buddhist nuns," *The Times of India*, Feb 11, 1975; "Protest by Senators, Monks," *The Washington Post*, Apr 1, 1975.

<sup>6</sup> "The Americans Promised Us," *The Washington Post*, Apr 22, 1975.

<sup>7</sup> "Chronology of Vietnam War," *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 30, 1975.

<sup>8</sup> Nghia M. Vo, *The Vietnamese Boat People, 1954 and 1975-1992*, (McFarland, 2004), 83-141.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

their immediate families, and lacked familiarity with the language and culture of their host countries. Within this context, the Vietnamese, like other refugees, developed forms of politics that turned towards the conditions in the homeland. As other scholars have noted, refugee cultural politics are often wrapped in shrouds of nostalgia for a foregone world and the life these refugees had left behind.<sup>10</sup> However, for the Vietnamese, the nature of “homeland politics” was less something entirely novel than a recalibration of existing political and national narratives that had shaped South Vietnamese society and politics for the last two-odd decades.

In this chapter, I am concerned with how the Republican anticommunist discourse that Vietnamese refugees brought with them to their new world are redeployed to interpret and frame events surrounding their migratory experiences, articulate an overseas “Vietnamese” identity, and mobilize in politics. In this sense, Vietnamese refugees are essentially understood as former citizens of a Vietnamese Republican nation. Summarily, this chapter seeks to understand Vietnamese American collective memory as an extension of Republican anticommunism, defined in this dissertation as those ideological narratives that had become hegemonic through nation-building and state-formation in South Vietnam. The reapplication of Republican anticommunism in Vietnamese refugee communities is centered around the fall of Saigon and what this event signified for the anticommunist “struggle” of the Vietnamese people. Effectively a “collective trauma” which bonded the experiences of those in the diaspora, the fall of Saigon marked another chapter in Vietnamese “anticommunist” history and as such subjected existing discourses and modes of identification to new ways of interpretation and framing. Republican anticommunism provided the political language through which Vietnamese refugees understood the reasons for their mass displacement. It stipulated the political identity of this newly formed diaspora and shaped how Vietnamese refugees collectively should and must respond to their “traumatic” loss of nation. Republican anticommunism, ultimately, became “refugeed”—that is, the discourse which had provided meaning for national belonging in South Vietnam transformed into one which gave meaning to diasporic belonging for those who fled overseas.

“Cultural trauma,” as Jeffrey Alexander argues, is a social construction. It is created through a mobilization process by which “‘claims’ about the shape of sociality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action” tied to an event are collectively and strategically represented.<sup>11</sup> As a social construction, “collective trauma...do[es] not result from the intrinsic nature of the original suffering.”<sup>12</sup> Rather, collectively acknowledge trauma comes into being through the mobilizing activities by political actors who have both idealistic and material interests in advancing a “new master narrative” to define and modify a group’s collective identity. Such is the case with how the “trauma” of Saigon’s collapse came to define the political, cultural, and ethnic identity of Vietnamese Americans. The period of Vietnamese exodus and resettlement following 1975 initiated a “trauma process” through which a Vietnamese American identity tied

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<sup>10</sup> Osten Wahlbeck, “The concept of diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28:2(2020), 221-238; Thembisa Waetjen, “The ‘home’ in homeland: gender, national space, and Inkatha’s politics of ethnicity,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22:4(1999), 653-678; Arta Ankrava, “From Displaced Persons to Exiles: Nationalism, Anti-Communism, and the Shaping of Latvian American Diaspora,” (Diss., University of Minnesota, 2016); Yossi Shain, *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of the Nation-State*, (University of Michigan Press, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Alexander, “Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma,” in Jeffrey Alexander (ed.), *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, (University of California Press, 2004), 11-12.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 16.



the loss of nation and refugee flight was defined, represented, articulated, and mobilized. However, rather than the creation of an entirely “new story” for collective identification, Vietnamese refugees drew upon existing narratives, reformulating previously articulated anticommunist representations into a narrative that uniquely spoke to their refugee conditions.

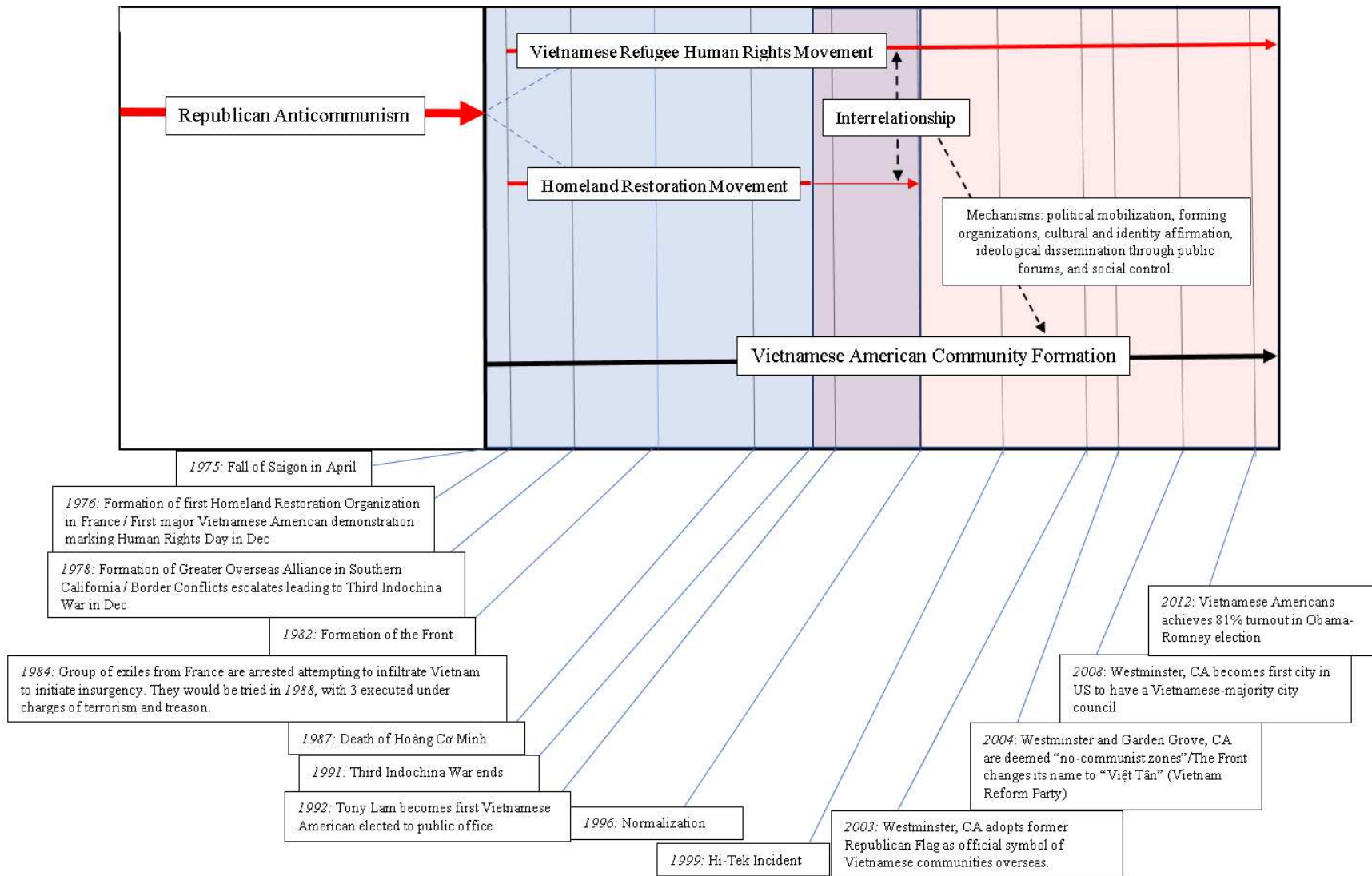
This chapter will explore the recalibration of Republican anticommunism as Vietnamese refugee identity through two interrelated political movements that dominated the formative years of the Vietnamese American community. The first of which is a “Human Rights Movement” pushed by Vietnamese refugees since the very early days of the community. This movement sought to articulate the causes of Vietnamese flight, condemn committed “atrocities” of communism in the homeland, and represent Vietnamese refugee suffering in an appeal to American and world sympathies. The movement sought to expand relief, protection, and aid to refugees stranded in the first-asylum countries in Southeast Asia, while also advocating for increased quotas, family reunification, and resettlement in Western countries. Strategically, the movement deployed letter writing campaigns, protests and demonstrations, and public speeches and testimonies before governing bodies like the US Congress and the United Nations. The second was the “Homeland Restoration Movement.” Essentially a paramilitary movement, Homeland Restoration began as an overseas lobbying group for the “resistance” to communist rule in Vietnam and evolved into active mobilization to send exiles back to Indochina to wage guerrilla war against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV). The goal of such a movement was to “restore” the lost nation of South Vietnam—whether through the specific reconstruction of the Republic of Vietnam or, at the very broadest, a “non-communist” Vietnamese state. The conceived reconstruction of the homeland was violent in nature, entailing the forcible overthrow of Vietnamese communism through popular insurrection and guerrilla war.

These two movements addressed different concerns in Vietnamese refugee political landscape. The former addressed the turmoil and heartache surrounding refugee plight, while the latter responded to the loss of nation. The movements were deeply intertwined and membership in one often meant affiliation to the other. However, what bounded these two movements was the commonality of discourse and the ways these discourses allowed the refugees to make claims about the reasons for their exodus, the criminality of the communist regime, and the experienced suffering of their Vietnamese compatriots. These movements drew on a common set of assumptions, terminologies, and narratives that derived from the national formation experience in South Vietnam. Joined by a commonality of discourse and purpose, activists who mobilized around these two issues created the conditions that allowed these movements to symbiotically develop. As these movements rose into dominance, they became master narratives which fundamentally shaped the political character of early Vietnamese America.

As a consequence, an exile Vietnamese community became formed around these two movements. These movements generated a plethora of community organizations and activities, including not only those with explicit political purposes, but also cultural and charitable ones as well. As these groups develop, their activities laid the groundwork for the politics, identity, and culture of what is today the Vietnamese American community. Thus, the integration of Republican anticommunist narratives into community functions and organizational purposes allowed Republican anticommunism to be perpetuated overseas. Republican anticommunism informed how these groups understand their role within the community, the political purposes to which they aspire, and how they narrate their recent past. These organizations served as the

mechanisms through which Republican anticommunism is “re-consolidated” in Vietnamese America.

Graph 5: Theoretical Rendition of Republican Anticommunist Reconstitution in Vietnamese America.



A historical rendering of this process is graphically displayed above. The blue-shaded area on the timeline marks the period during which exile politics outside of the American electoral system predominates. The red-shaded area marks the period during which Vietnamese American politics turned towards strategies of voting and capturing representation through the electoral process. As the graph above shows, the movements for “Homeland Restoration” and “Human Rights” were interrelated political endeavors which shaped Vietnamese American formation. These movements affected community formation through political mobilization, the formation of organizations, means of cultural affirmation, communication forums, and social control. Examples of these mechanisms and how they operated will be detailed in the sections below.

These movements were informed by Republican anticommunism and thus served as the link between Republican anticommunism and Vietnamese American community formation. While the Homeland Restoration Movement would fade into obscurity following normalization between the United States and SRV in 1996, human rights issues continue to pervade Vietnamese American political conversations up until the present day. The overlapping area of blue and red mark the period during which Homeland Restoration began to lose its political luster, and Vietnamese American politics began turning towards electoral participation as means to enact anticommunist agendas. Below the graph are a scattering of key historical events in Vietnamese American history and serve as empirical references to contextualize the evolution of Vietnamese American politics since 1975. These events will be included in the discussions of this chapter.

The chapter below will be largely constructed around reports, editorials, and articles from the weekly news magazine *Trắng Đen* [Black and White] which ran from March 1976-1979 and was based out of La Crescenta in Southern California. Edited by Việt Định Phương, *Trắng Đen* was once a major news forum in South Vietnam. Its editor had been active politically in Republican politics and the forum had served as a voice for the “opposition” against the administration of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu.<sup>13</sup> In the early Vietnamese American community, *Trắng Đen* is advertised as the “First Overseas Vietnamese Weekly” and primarily covers issues of politics and cultures, containing news reports, short stories, and editorials, as well as some English-language content. At its height, the newspaper claimed a circulation of 90,000 in the United States and Europe.<sup>14</sup> Because of its popularity, historical embeddedness, and involvement in early Vietnamese American politics, *Trắng Đen* will serve as a useful empirical foundation for insight into the politics and activities of early Vietnamese America.

The chapter begins with a historical narration of how the two movements for Homeland Restoration and Human Rights emerged. It makes the argument that these two movements are intertwined by not only their similarity of discourse, but also by their membership and the political reliance of these two movements upon one another. Second, the chapter then moves to discuss the reproduction of national symbols and politics surrounding this reproduction. Third, the chapter focuses on an influential early political organization calling themselves the “Greater Overseas Alliance” to illustrate the political and ideological connectivity between Homeland Restoration and Human Rights. The section relies on the journal’s political forum *Thức Tỉnh*

<sup>13</sup> For brief biography of Việt Định Phương, see his obituary: “Nhà Báo Việt Định Phương Từ Trần, Thọ 82 Tuổi,” *Việt Báo*, Dec. 2, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> “Lá Tư Chủ Nhiệm,” *Trắng Đen*, No.21, July 27, 1976.

(Awaken) to demonstrate how Republican anticommunist narratives informed and became reintegrated into exile politics. Fourth, the chapter discusses community formation. While the Greater Overseas Alliance and other political organizations aided in generating cultural life within the community, they also sought to police and control the circulation of ideas and culture, particularly in warding off communist influences.

The discussions of what this chapter refers to as Vietnamese America's "formative period" (1975-1980) will pave way for examining one of the most powerful organizations to manifest in the community's history: The National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam (or, simply, the Front for short). The chapter demonstrates how patterns of politics deployed by the Front reflects the dominance of reconfigured Republican anticommunism through discourses of Homeland Restoration and Human Rights. While these discourses aided in legitimizing the Front, geopolitical developments made it opportune for a "military solution" rather than civil one to predominate in the politics of Vietnamese exiles. These developments, and how the Front exploited these developments, aid to explain their monumental rise during the 1980s. The chapter concludes with brief reflections on how the early period of community formation continues to shape Vietnamese American politics today. Most significantly, the chapter argues that the clout that Vietnamese Americans today enjoys in electoral politics are a direct consequence of these early political activities. The movements for Homeland Restoration and Human Rights had laid the mobilizing infrastructure and foundational discourses for the contemporary politics of the community.

### *Human Rights and Homeland Restoration*

In the Christmas season of 1977, a major conference was held to formally inaugurate an organization calling itself the "Greater Overseas Alliance for the National Restoration of Vietnam" (henceforth: Greater Overseas Alliance). It was a grand affair. Representatives came from across the United States and Europe congregated in the Embassy Auditorium in the Los Angeles financial district to elect a central executive committee. This governing body would include not only former politicians, journalists, servicemen, and notables of the South Vietnamese society, but also representatives from major religions Buddhism and Catholicism, as well as the anticommunist religious sects Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo. Attending this conference, as well, were members of the "Armed Forces" *Lực Lượng Quân Nhân* comprised of former Republican officers, the exile organization "Free Vietnamese" *Người Việt Tự Do*, as well as Vietnamese student groups from local universities and colleges.<sup>15</sup> The diversity of this gathering was meant to project an image of unity and popular support across the spectrum of political and religious affiliations within a refugee diaspora just coming into being. A major organizational and logistic feat, this conference brought together internationally dispersed members of the diaspora around a common cause for Homeland Restoration.

The vision for restoration of a "non-communist" South Vietnam had been articulated a year earlier in Paris. Then and there, the former South Vietnamese Airforce officer Lê Quốc Túy and the Hòa Hảo leader Lê Phước Sang announced the formation of the "National United Front of Patriotic Forces to Liberate South Vietnam" *Mặt Trận Thống Nhất các Lực Lượng Yêu Nước Giải Phóng Nam Việt Nam* (henceforth: Patriotic Forces). In its founding statement released in February 1976, the organization declared that "the war still continues relentless in the South" and

<sup>15</sup> "Đại Hội Ra Mắt Liên Đoàn Chí Nguyên," *Trắng Đen*, No.41, Jan. 13, 1978.

called for nationwide and overseas support of resistance activities against Vietnamese communist rule. In large part, however, the early activities of the organization entailed lobbying Non-Alignment countries to pressure Vietnam into becoming diplomatically “neutral” and adhere to democratic norms in hopes of overturning communist rule.<sup>16</sup>

Formation of Patriotic Forces came amidst growing newspaper reports of resistance activities and armed opposition to communism within the vicinity of Vietnam. *Trắng Đen*, the first Vietnamese refugee weekly to be established in the United States, published a litany of news, rumors, and discussions around the activities of what the weekly called the “Homeland Resistance Force” *Lực Lượng Kháng Chiến Phục Quốc* or the “Homeland Restoration Army” *Kháng Chiến Phục Quốc Quân*, assumed to be comprised of former Republican soldiers, dissident religious sects, Buddhist and Catholic leaders, and defected NLF guerrillas.<sup>17</sup> The widely rumored case of resistance at Vinh Sơn Church in Saigon entailed some 12 hours of gunfire between the “resistance army” and communist forces in February of 1976. In this case, the resistance force was ultimately defeated, leading to the capture of their leaders, including several Catholic priests and former Republican officers.<sup>18</sup> Newspapers like *Trắng Đen* played up the successes of this “People’s Homeland Restoration” *Nhân Dân Phục Quốc* insurgency transpiring in Vietnam and reported diligently on the various violent skirmishes of its armed forces. Reports glorified the assassinations, bombings, and ambushes waged against the communist government, while painting an image of a popularly supported guerrilla movement of Southern “heroic warriors” *chiến sĩ anh dũng* who “refused to submit” to Northern communist rule.<sup>19</sup> There were also ideas about relying on resistance forces to aid escaping refugees through land routes.<sup>20</sup>

While the actual veracity of such reports is questionable—which often relied on testimony, letters, rumors, and stories from newly arrived refugees—a narrative of widespread

<sup>16</sup> “Tuyên ngôn của Mặt Trận Thống Nhất các LL Yêu Nước Giải Phóng Nam Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 27, 1976; “500 Việt Kiều Ba Lê họp lập Mặt Trận Thống Nhất... Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Sắp Được Tái Lập?” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Mar. 6, 1976; “Đây, hoạt động của 2 mặt trận kháng chiến lập tại mỹ và pháp,” *Trắng Đen*, No.4, Apr. 2, 1976; “Một chánh phủ VN lưu vong vận động tại Pháp,” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Mar. 6, 1976.

<sup>17</sup> *Trắng Đen*, edited by Việt Định Phương, was once a news forum in South Vietnam. Its editor had been active politically in Republican politics, claiming to serve as a voice for the “opposition” against the administration of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. In the early Vietnamese American community, *Trắng Đen* is advertised as the “First Overseas Vietnamese Weekly.” The newspaper ran from March 1976 until roughly the end of 1979. It primarily covers issues of politics and cultures, containing news reports, short stories, and editorials, as well as some English-language content. At its height, the newspaper claimed a circulation of 90,000 in the United States and Europe (“Lá Tư Chủ Nhiệm,” *Trắng Đen*, No.21, July 27, 1976). For brief biography of Việt Định Phương, see his obituary: “Nhà Báo Việt Định Phương Từ Trần, Thọ 82 Tuổi,” *Việt Báo*, Dec. 2, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Ngô Đình Chương, “Saigon: Chạm Súng Lớn Phục QUốc Quân Chiến Đấu 12 Tiếng,” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Mar. 6, 1976; Văn Việt, “Bí ẩn sau vụ vinh sơn,” *Trắng Đen*, No.5, Apr. 9, 1976.

<sup>19</sup> “Sẽ đánh lớn trong dịp bầu cử QH thống nhất 2 miền VN,” *Trắng Đen*, Mar. 27, 1976; “Súng đạn đủ xài: Tin kháng chiến,” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Mar. 6, 1976; “Quân Dân Phục Quốc Chiếm Quận Tịnh Biên,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 5, Apr. 9, 1976; “Chạm súng lớn tại Long Xuyên,” *Trắng Đen*, No.5, Apr. 9, 1976; “Quân đội CS miền Nam đung độ Tiêu đoàn Hắc Long gần Mỹ Tho,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 6, Apr. 16, 1976; “Phục Quốc Quân Miền Nam Áo Ất Tấn Kích,” No. 18, *Trắng Đen*, July 1, 1976; “LL Dân Quân Phục Quốc Công Khai Hoạt Động Mạnh,” No. 19, July 7, 1976; “Sức mạnh của kháng chiến phục quốc quân Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, Jan. 31, 1977; “Nguồn tin Liên Minh vừa tiết lộ: Đài Phát Thanh Mặt Nghe Được ở Saigon,” *Trắng Đen*, No.45, Feb. 15, 1978; “Kháng chiến đánh Cái Sắn, CSVN bắt 300 dân mang đi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 101 Mar. 7, 1978;

<sup>20</sup> “Kéo đến Liên Hiệp Quốc yêu cầu giúp đoàn tụ GĐ hay nhờ cậy Kháng Chiến quân dân người than cho chúng ta,” *Trắng Đen*, No.41, Dec. 10, 1976.

anticommunist resistance in the homeland captured the imaginations of Vietnamese exiles.<sup>21</sup> As presented in the 1976 declaration of Patriotic Forces, “the people of Vietnam, both North and South, have clearly recognized that the communist leadership in North Vietnam had lied through their deceptive propaganda” about liberation. In reality, according to the organization, Vietnam has not been liberated at all, but simply been placed under totalitarian communist rule. Recognition of this fact and the brutality of communist rule has led “hundreds of thousands [of those in the South]...to collaboratively retrieve their guns and stand up alongside the former military of the Nation to continue to heroically struggle...against the dictatorial Northern communists.”<sup>22</sup> For the Patriotic Forces and other efforts for Homeland Restoration, it was the patriotic duty of those who had left the homeland to support the brewing resistance movement politically, morally, and financially.<sup>23</sup>

Within the first several years following the fall of Saigon, a plethora of organizations dedicated to supporting anticommunist resistance forces in the homeland emerged in Vietnamese communities overseas. In its April 1976 issue, *Trắng Đen* reported the activities of the “Resistance Front” led by Phạm Nam Sách, a former representative in the National Assembly. Operating out of California, this organization was then seeking to mobilize material support for the resistance in the homeland.<sup>24</sup> In the same month, the “Force to Restore the Nation of Vietnam” *Lực Lượng Phục Hưng Quốc Gia Việt Nam* was established in San Diego, vowing to support the “righteous” resistance in the homeland, work to actualize “just and lasting peace” in Southeast Asia, and “endure all challenges, to be worthy of being a person, a citizen of the Vietnamese nation.”<sup>25</sup> From this early mobilization, a dispersed coalition calling itself the “Support Force for the Homeland Restoration Resistance Army” *Lực Lượng Yểm Trợ Kháng Chiến Phục Quốc Quân* (henceforth: Support Force), emerged in Paris in November 1976.<sup>26</sup> The coalition sought to unify the various Vietnamese exile communities into a “solidified bloc” to combat communist propaganda overseas, and support the “heroic resistance” in the homeland.<sup>27</sup>

A public call for support published in *Trắng Đen* led to the creation of several loosely affiliated American chapters, and the American and European wings of the coalition unified in late January 1977 to form the “Overseas Homeland Restoration Front” *Mặt Trận Hải Ngoại Phục Quốc*. Following the founding of the Support Force, *Trắng Đen* explicitly allied itself to the coalition and increased political coverage and dissemination of editorials promoting support

<sup>21</sup> There is some factual basis for such optimism amongst exiles during that period. News report attacking “reactionaries” were regular in press releases by the SRV. Furthermore, activity by anticommunist forces in the years that followed 1975 eventually forced the SRV to pass Resolution 31/NQ-TW in 1980 to combat “counter revolutionaries” in the country. Explicitly mentioned are “reactionary” forces that operated in South Vietnam, including the “People’s National Restoration Force” *Lực Lượng Dân Quân Phục Quốc* based in Saigon (“Đề Cương Tuyên Truyền: Kỷ niệm 55 năm ngày truyền thống lực lượng CSND [20/7/1962-20/7/2017],” (Tổng Cục Cảnh Sát, May 2017), 11).

<sup>22</sup> “Tuyên ngôn của Mặt Trận Thống Nhất các LL Yêu Nước Giải Phóng Nam Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 27, 1976

<sup>23</sup> “Những ai chưa tin ở chiến thắng của KCPQQ, hãy nghe đồng bào vượt thoát kẻ: KCPQQ có chiếm đóng lãnh thổ Hãn Hòi,” *Trắng Đen*, Jan. 23, 1977.

<sup>24</sup> Lê Thanh Hoàng Dân, “Đây, hoạt động của 2 mặt trận kháng chiến lập tại mỹ và pháp,” *Trắng Đen*, Apr. 2, 1976.

<sup>25</sup> “Kháng Thư của Lực Lượng Hưng Việt,” Apr. 30, 1976.

<sup>26</sup> “Mặt Trận Yểm Trợ Kháng Chiến Thành Lập Tại Âu Châu,” *Trắng Đen*, Nov. 19, 1976.

<sup>27</sup> “Lời kêu gọi của lực lượng yểm trợ kháng chiến phục quốc,” *Trắng Đen*, Nov. 26, 1976.

for Homeland Restoration.<sup>28</sup> From the beginning of 1977, activities of the Support Force became widespread amongst Vietnamese exiles, bringing various segments of the community into a campaign to internationally promote the “resistance” back home.<sup>29</sup> In January, veterans of Republican military and police force then residing Santa Ana, Los Angeles, and San Diego convened to draft a public letter of advocacy for the Support Force.<sup>30</sup> Vietnamese exiles in Escondido and San Pedro formed chapters of the Support Force at the end of the month.<sup>31</sup> And in late February, a general conference was held in Encinitas to formalize support for the coalition.<sup>32</sup>

As Homeland Restoration mobilization intensified, Vietnamese refugees were also becoming increasingly vocal about human rights violations in communist Vietnam. As former South Vietnamese citizens, the newly refugees were not unfamiliar with the discourse on human rights. As pointed out in previous chapters, across the span of the Republican era, the celebration of Human Rights Day was an annual event every December in South Vietnam, during which time civil servants, soldiers, and the Republican citizenry politically engaged with and “studied” the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—though such engagements were often catered to imperatives of different regimes and Republican anticommunism. Contemporary conditions, however, accentuated Human Rights issues in the early days of Vietnamese America. First, regular reports of death, imprisonment, and maltreatment of former South Vietnamese notables, politicians, and servicemen following the communist victory pointed to political retribution enacted against fellow countrymen who were unable to flee the homeland.<sup>33</sup> Here, guilt for leaving their compatriots behind and fear of total political and cultural eradication of what remained of a South Vietnamese society pushed Vietnamese refugees to mobilize in defense of their national brethren left behind. Second, the fact that Vietnamese refugees continued to pour out from the homeland—often in dangerous and desperate attempts of “escape”—compelled those who had made it to Western countries to act on behalf of their fleeing compatriots. And last, the newly elected Jimmy Carter had promised to make “Human Rights” the cornerstone of his Presidency. While the Carter administration’s commitment to human rights was far from “absolute,” and its record was, at best, mixed,<sup>34</sup> Vietnamese refugees, nevertheless, saw Carter’s

<sup>28</sup> “Trắng Đen minh xác lập trường,” *Trắng Đen*, Jan. 23, 1977.

<sup>29</sup> “Thư tòa soạn: sức mạnh của kiêu bào,” *Trắng Đen*, Feb. 1, 1977.

<sup>30</sup> “Cắt máu ăn thề, quyết 1 lòng vì chánh nghĩa phục quốc,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 13, 1977.

<sup>31</sup> “Muôn Người như một cũng đứng lên: Dân Quân Quốc Gia Nhập Cuộc ủng hộ Kháng Chiến PQ,” *Trắng Đen*, No.49, February 1, 1977; “Cựu Quân Nhân ở San Pedro Cương Quyết Ủng Hộ KC,” *Trắng Đen*, No.48, Jan. 28, 1977

<sup>32</sup> “Đại hội lực lượng quân nhân hải ngoại yểm trợ kháng chiến,” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Feb. 24, 1977.

<sup>33</sup> Trần Văn Hương, for example, reportedly died from suicide in a communist prison in May 1975 (“Cựu phó TT Hương đã tự sát ngày 15 tháng 5,” *Trắng Đen*, No.5, Apr. 9, 1976). His death actually came much later in 1982. Similarly, *Trắng Đen* erroneously reported the death of Thích Trí Quang in 1976. The newspaper later corrected this mistake and noted that the former political monk was being kept in a communist prison (“Tin thêm về TT Trí Quang,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 6, Apr. 16, 1976). While these examples may point to the poor information sources of early Vietnamese American newspapers, they also reflect the broad expectation of communist retribution against those who sided with the anticommunist South during the war. The fact that they were inaccurate news reports did not eliminate the fact that these reports, nevertheless, shaped the imaginations and response of Vietnamese Americans to assumed communist brutality in the homeland.

<sup>34</sup> David F. Schmitz and Vanessa Walker, “Jimmy Carter and the Foreign Policy of Human Rights: The Development of a Post-Cold War Foreign Policy,” *Diplomatic History*, 281:1(2004), 113-143; David Carleton and Michael Stohl, “The Foreign Policy of Human Rights: Rhetoric and Reality from Jimmy Carter to Ronald Reagan,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 7:2(1985), 205-229; Hanne Van Brien, “Jimmy Carter, Human Rights and the Cold



campaign promise as a means to publicly articulate their own grievances against the communist regime. Theoretically validated by the highest office in the land, the rallying call for “Human Rights” presented an opportunity for Vietnamese refugees to acquire American sympathies and international support in condemning what these refugees saw as the most grievous of human rights abuses.<sup>35</sup>

Early on in their exodus, Vietnamese refugees had established various human rights groups to advocate for the release of political prisoners, the end to religious persecution, and freedom of press in newly communist Vietnam.<sup>36</sup> In September, chapters of the “Committee to Protect Human Rights” in Canada mobilized to protest the arrival of diplomats from the Vietnamese communist regime, waging demonstrations and distributing tens of thousands of fliers in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal calling upon Vietnamese refugees into action. Highlighting communist reeducation policies enacted following 1975, the protesters demanded “freedom for 500,000 political prisoners,” deeming such policies to be violation of human rights which subjected former Republican military men and civil servants to “slavery” and unjust imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> In November, Vietnamese refugees congregated in front of the UN Embassy in New York to protest Vietnam’s application to join the United Nations, and, in commemoration of Human Rights Day in December, Vietnamese refugees waged another demonstration at the same location.<sup>38</sup>

Politics during this formative period in Vietnamese American history was characterized by the close collaboration between Homeland Restoration and Human Rights mobilizing efforts. Although the organizations constituting each of these movements operated independently of one another, these organizations conceived Human Rights and Homeland Restoration as politically and ideologically entwined. Participation in one movement often meant collaboration and interaction within the other. Illustrative the mutual support between these two movements, as Human Rights protesters marched on the UN Embassy in November, the Support Force sent a telegram to the “Committee to Fight for Human Rights” praising their “spirit of struggle,” and promising that “in any struggle in the future, whenever you require assistance, the LLYTC

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War,” *E-International Relations*, July 8, 2015, <<https://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/08/jimmy-carter-human-rights-and-the-cold-war/>>.

<sup>35</sup> Commentary on and letters to the Carter Administration and Human Rights: Lê Minh Trực, “Thời cuộc: sự chuyển hướng của Hoa Kỳ,” *Trắng Đen*, No.51, Feb. 18, 1977; “Viet Refugees Identify Their Concerns,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 18, 1977; “Nhận Định: Nhân Quyền ở Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 18, 1977; “18-3: Một Phái Đoàn Tị Nạn VN Trình Thỉnh Nguyễn Thư Tới TT Carter,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 18, 1977; “TT Carter Mạnh Mẽ Tuyên Bỏ Trước Đại Hội Đồng LHQ: ‘Nhân quyền không thể bị hy sinh vì các vấn đề Quốc Tế,’” *Trắng Đen*, No.4, Mar. 25, 1977; “Vietnamese Ad Hoc Committee on Human Rights,” *Trắng Đen*, No.4, Mar. 25, 1977; Qué Sơn, “Tổng Thống Mỹ Carter Trước Vấn Đề Á Châu,” *Trắng Đen*, No.4, Mar. 25, 1977.

<sup>36</sup> One of the first public call for a formation of some form of Human Rights organization came in June 1976 through *Trắng Đen*. See the call to action by the “Mobilizing Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam” in “Nhiều Đoàn Thể Việt Kiều Lập Ủy Ban Vận Động Nhân Quyền Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 15, June 13, 1976. This organization sought to collate “verified documentation” from Vietnamese refugees demonstrating human rights abuses by the Vietnamese communists. Their strategy was to deploy these materials to convince the UN and Western nations to place pressure on the SRV.

<sup>37</sup> “Việt Kiều tại Gia Nã Đại Xuống Đường Đạp ‘Con Cháu Bác Hồ,’” *Trắng Đen*, No.34, Oct. 23, 1976;

<sup>38</sup> “26-11 Biểu Tình Trước Tòa Nhà LHQ Tố Cáo CSVN Vi Phạm Nhân Quyền,” *Trắng Đen*, No.40, Nov. 26, 1976; “Nhân ngày kỷ niệm ban hành tuyên ngôn QT Nhân quyền,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 41, Dec. 10, 1976.

[Support Force] will fully mobilize to come to you, and will support in any way possible.”<sup>39</sup> Having mobilized their own members to participate in December’s protest, the Support Force and their allies in the Homeland Restoration movement sent letters to American journalists, politicians, religious leaders, and congress members to lobby for investigation into treatment within reeducation camps, “New Economic Zones,” and other alleged cases of human rights violations committed by the SRV. Making explicit their support for “armed resistance forces,” the signatories of these letters presented Homeland Restoration as a parcel to the struggle for human rights in Vietnam. They write, “we firmly stand behind those valiant fighters of this [resistance] Front, for it is better to fight to get back the Human Rights and Civil Liberties from the Reds’ hands for South Viet [sic] people than secretly and shamefully die as animals under the communist yoke.”<sup>40</sup> For these political activists, mobilization around Human Rights promised not only to save the hundreds of thousands of “soldiers—civilians—cadres” who were languishing in communist prisons, it also was a means to mobilize support for the resistance in the homeland.<sup>41</sup>

Out of the early mobilization around Human Rights, the Catholic priest Đỗ Thanh Hà emerged as a leader and spokesperson for the movement. Once having served for some 12 years in the parishes of Long Xuyên Province during the Republican era, Đỗ Thanh Hà became a central mobilizing figure in the early Vietnamese refugee politics. He later moved on to become chairman of the Federation of Vietnamese Catholics in the USA and managing director of the Vietnamese Catholic Center in Orange County.<sup>42</sup> In early 1977, Đỗ Thanh Hà worked to establish the “Struggle Movement to Demand Human Rights in Vietnam” which coordinated refugee human rights activism in western United States. In a speech in March, Đỗ Thanh Hà demonstrates how the human rights effort was squarely situated within the “traumatic” loss of nation. He argued, “the longing for country, the love of home” did not fade as the days passed in this foreign land. Rather, the passage of time has allowed that “suffering and pain to deepen within the psyche of everyone.” Unable to forget, memory has festered, and “every moment has brought more bitterness.” And as if nostalgic longing was not yet unbearable, “every day we receive news through letters, lived testimonies, for us to know that our relatives, our friends are being brutally excruciated by the communists.” These conditions made it a moral obligation for Vietnamese refugees to act in hopes of ending the suffering of those they had left behind.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> “Lực Lượng Yểm Trợ Kháng Chiến, Kính Gởi: Ủy Ban Tranh Đấu Nhân Quyền tại New York,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 41, Dec. 10, 1976.

<sup>40</sup> “Response of Viet Refugees to US Fighters for Human Rights in VN,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977.

<sup>41</sup> “Cơn địa chấn của Cộng Sản Việt Nam: cộng luận thế giới xoay chiều kết án CSVN vi phạm nhân quyền,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “Bất ngờ trên chính trường Mỹ: Tân Đại Sứ Mỹ Tại Liên Hiệp Quốc Bên Vực Dân Quân Cán Cảnh VNCH,” *Trắng Đen*, No.45, Jan. 15, 1977. Later conjoining of Homeland Restoration and Human Rights can be found in December issues of *Đuốc Thiêng*, the “Information and Training” organ of the Garden Grove chapter of the “Overseas Homeland Restoration Front” *Mặt Trận Hải Ngoại Phục Quốc*. Its 1982 issue, for example, dictated that its members must “study” the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and reprinted its content in the organ’s pages. This “study” went in tandem with “political materials” on the various “restoration” that needed to occur—restoration of nation *phục quốc*, power *phục quyền*, politics *phục chính*, and literature *phục văn* (“Ngày nào còn bạo lực ở bất cứ từ đâu tới, ngày đó ta còn phải tiếp tục đấu tranh cho nhân quyền”; “Bản Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền”; “Tài Liệu Chính Trị: Đại Cáo Phục Quốc,” *Đuốc Thiêng*, No. 2, Dec. 1982).

<sup>42</sup> Obituaries: Thanh Phong, “Linh Mục Thomas Đỗ Thanh Hà, Vị Cựu Giám Đốc TTCG Thứ Hai Vừa Qua Đời,” *Viễn Đông Daily News*, Nov.17, 2017 and “Cáo Phó: Cha Thomas Đỗ Thanh Hà,” *Tin Vui*, Nov.17, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> “Phong Trào Đòi Hòi Nhân Quyền Tại VN chính thức ra đời,” *Trắng Đen*, No.4, Mar. 25, 1977.

“Communique 1” of the organization outlined the contemporary imperatives for the budding Human Rights movement amongst refugees. The organization argued for, firstly, “creating [international] awareness about the suffering of prisoners in Vietnam.” Secondly, Vietnamese refugees must then push countries of the world to enact pressure upon the SRV to “return human rights to the prisoners being held.” The communique called for “adamant and unceasing struggle...until human rights is reestablished in Vietnam.”<sup>44</sup> In April, to commemorate the fall of Saigon, Đỗ Thanh Hà and his organization orchestrated major demonstrations in Orange County, San Diego, San Francisco, and other cities with sizable Vietnamese populations. Replicating a form of communist denunciation once utilized by the Republic of Vietnam, the organization would also distribute “White Papers” documenting the litany crimes committed by the SRV following communist seizure of power. Letters would be sent to various countries across the world to mobilize support, as well as to the Vietnamese government to “demand the release and better treatment of their prisoners.”<sup>45</sup>

Mobilization by Đỗ Thanh Hà and other human rights organizations were relentless across 1977. In March, demonstrators protested in front of the White House demanding that President Carter act to condemn human rights violations in Vietnam. In the same month, Đỗ Thanh Hà’s organization orchestrated a demonstration in Fountain Valley pulling in some 3,000 participants to commemorate the Hung King Festival, as well as demand human rights. In May, the Venerable Thích Giác Đức engaged in a hunger strike in front of the UN Embassy demanding freedom of religion in Vietnam. The push for human rights appeared to have spread to within the vicinity of Vietnam itself. From Huế, a letter was sent by Bishop Nguyễn Kim Điền to overseas communities, outlining in detail the religious persecution faced by Catholics following the fall of Saigon. In March, the Buddhist Secular Institute in Saigon sent its own documentation of religious persecution against Buddhist communities to the SRV, condemning the destruction of temples, the takeover of religious sites for military and governmental purposes, political intimidation by police officers, and imprisonment of Buddhist leaders once associated with the Republican regime. Excerpts from the Secular Institute’s documentation were republished in *Trắng Đen*.<sup>46</sup>

It was in this context that the Greater Overseas Alliance was formed in late 1977. While far from the first exile organization to emerge in the post-1975 era, the Greater Overseas Alliance, on the one hand, epitomized the conjoining of the Homeland Restoration and Human Rights politics that dominated Vietnamese America during those formative years. At its height, this organization would have chapters across numerous American states, in provinces of Canada, as well as in Thailand, Japan, and Australia. From its first conference in December 1977, the operations of the Greater Overseas Alliance highlighted the organizational and logistical capabilities that Vietnamese refugees had already developed just two years into their exodus. On the other hand, and most important for the task of this chapter, the discourse deployed by the Greater Overseas Alliance demonstrates how mobilization around Homeland Restoration and

<sup>44</sup> “Phong trào tranh đấu đòi nhân quyền tại VN Thông Cáo Số 1,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 18, 1977.

<sup>45</sup> “Phong Trào Đòi Hòi Nhân Quyền Tại VN chính thức ra đời,” *Trắng Đen*, No.4, Mar. 25, 1977; replication of these “White Papers” *Bạch Thư* would be published in *Trắng Đen*’s Lunar New Year issue in 1978: “Bạch Thư Tố Cáo tội ác cộng sản Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.43&44, Feb. 3, 1978, 39-46.

<sup>46</sup> Summary of these events and republication of the Buddhist Secular Institute’s report can be found in *Trắng Đen*’s 1978 Lunar New Year issue: “Tổng Kết Tình Hình Việt Nam Trong Năm Qua,” *Trắng Đen*, No.43&44, Feb. 3, 1978, 34-59.

Human Rights extensively relied on the frameworks, terminologies, and narratives proffered by Republican anticommunism. Below, the chapter will examine the organization's political forum *Thức Tỉnh* (Awaken) to explore that how Republican anticommunism informed Vietnamese refugees represented and interpreted the issue of human rights in Vietnam and why Vietnamese refugees were able to conceive homeland restoration as real and achievable promise. The consolidation of the Republican-anticommunist-inspired Homeland Restoration and Human Rights movements in early Vietnamese American politics would later aid in the rise of one of the most powerful exile organizations of the 1980s.

### *The Republican Past*

The inaugural conference to form the Greater Overseas Alliance proceeded with solemnity. Despite the loss of nation some two years earlier, the symbols of the former Republic were very much alive in such a ceremony. An ancestral altar was raised in the conference hall. The yellow flag with three red stripes was laid upon the altar in the center. Beside it was the Greater Overseas Alliance insignia with a yellow silhouette of Vietnam and the words "Free Vietnam." Candles lit and the smoke of incense flowed as the attendees sang the national anthem of the Republic and the commemorative song for the fallen soldier—"Chiêu Hồn Tử Sĩ"—while saluting Vietnamese Republican flag.<sup>47</sup> Signified in the event was a sense of historical continuity, political linkage, and cultural connectivity with not only the fallen anticommunist Republic, but also the longer, "ancestral" Vietnamese past. Through redeployment of rituals, ceremony, and symbols associated with the Republic of Vietnam, the South Vietnamese past and the refugee present became blended, conjuring nationalistic sentiments to provide both the event and this newly formed organization a shroud of political legitimacy and authenticity.

The reuse of these Republican symbols was not exclusive to the Greater Overseas Alliance. Veteran organizations which had vowed support for the Support Force earlier 1977—and now found themselves attending the inauguration of the Greater Overseas Alliance—had engaged in similar ritualistic displays. For example, the gathering of some 100 veterans of the former South Vietnamese military in January had, too, constructed their own ancestral altar, raised the Republican flag, and sang the national anthem as they pledged their own participation to the Homeland Restoration cause.<sup>48</sup> Demonstrations for human rights that transpired across the year, similarly, often entailed display of the "golden flag" to illustrate the anticommunist loyalties of the participants.<sup>49</sup> Signified through these events is that common repertoire of cultural and political symbols that early Vietnamese exile activists drew upon to demonstrate solidarity and political purpose.

The redeployment of these symbols, at least early on in Vietnamese American history, was not without controversy. Many of those who fled South Vietnam following the communist victory had ambivalent, if not hostile, views against the former Thiệu administration. *Trắng Đen* itself had been an "opposition" newspaper since 1963, producing content that politically attacked

<sup>47</sup> Công Phúc and Lê Dũng, "Liên Minh Hải Ngoại PQ Việt Nam Đã Hợp," *Trắng Đen*, No. 41, Jan. 13, 1978.

<sup>48</sup> "Cựu QN và Cảnh sát VN ở California Tham Gia Lực Lượng Yểm Trợ KC," *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977.

<sup>49</sup> Photographs can be found in "Tổng Kết Tình Hình Việt Nam Trong Năm Qua," *Trắng Đen*, No.43&44, Feb. 3, 1978.

the “corruption” against the various regimes of the Interregnum and the Thiệu administration. The organ, reconstructed overseas with its chief editor—Việt Định Phương—retained, consistently depicts Nguyễn Văn Thiệu as a national “traitor” and alleges that Thiệu had hoarded foreign currency and gold prior to his departure from South Vietnam to ensure a luxurious life overseas.<sup>50</sup> Việt Định Phương was not alone. Amongst the early diaspora, many were disillusioned with the former national leadership and their failure to protect South Vietnam from communist takeover.<sup>51</sup> A political cartoon in the Virginia-based monthly *Việt Báo* alleges: “As Republican Rangers protect Phước Long to the last drop of blood, Thiệu had given up this province to Hà Nội long ago!”<sup>52</sup> The responsibility for the loss of nation was placed squarely upon the shoulders of the Thiệu administration and the weakness of leadership. As such, while for many the “golden flag” signified the symbol of the nation, it was also associated with the “corruption” of the Thiệu administration and the abandonment of the leadership during the nation’s time of need.<sup>53</sup>

An editorial produced following the first anniversary of the fall of Saigon appealed to Vietnamese exiles to agree on what symbols should be used to signify overseas activities as belonging to those “Vietnamese who love freedom”—thus implicitly differentiating themselves from Vietnamese communists. The editorial itself was a reproduction of a letter sent into *Trắng Đen* amidst early confusion over whether former symbols such as the Republican flag and anthem should be used. This editorial by Nguyễn Nhật Minh suggested the scrapping of the former Republican flag, deeming it a symbol that “the international world now disregards” due to the activities of Thiệu and his administration. Rather than using the former Republican anthem, the author suggested using Phạm Duy’s iconic composition “Việt Nam, Việt Nam.” While the former had been exploited by former Republican regimes, the author argues that Phạm Duy’s song was “timeless” and the composer is counted as amongst those who had fled overseas.<sup>54</sup>

The suggestion by Nguyễn Nhật Minh faced some fierce opposition. One letter sent into *Trắng Đen* accused the author of “stepping on and negating 20 years of blood and bones as well as the value of the Republic of Vietnam that our people through, so many efforts and tribulations, had sought to stem the tide of communism.” Despite its history as an “opposition” newspaper, *Trắng Đen* stood on the side of reusing the Republican flag and symbols. Excerpting a memoir of a refugee, an editor’s letter pointed to how the flag served as a unifying symbol for not only those who were already resettled, but also amongst those refugees who were still languishing upon the boats and camps in Southeast Asia. The flag, for *Trắng Đen*, was “the flag of the nation not the flag of the regime.” In an emotional appeal, the newspaper editorialized how, as former

<sup>50</sup> “Thiệu bán nhà cũ, mua nhà mới 90 ngàn bằg Anh,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 51, Feb. 18, 1977; Việt Định Phương, “Chánh Đạo và Tà Đạo,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 4, Apr. 2, 1976; “‘Tông Tông’ Thiệu đang trốn ở đâu?” *Trắng Đen*, No. 7, Apr. 23, 1976

<sup>51</sup> In its public inauguration, one San Diego-based homeland restoration organization explicitly referred to Thiệu as a “national traitor” *phản quốc* and his allies: “dumb, rapacious, low life slaves” *bọn bộ hạ gia nô ngu dốt, tham tàn* (“Kháng Thư của Lực Lượng Hưng Việt,” *Trắng Đen*, No.8, Apr. 30, 1976). Commentary on national leadership, see “Cựu Tướng Trưởng: Hãy Trả Lời Trước Lịch Sử,” *Trắng Đen*, No.8, Apr. 30, 1976; see also, corruption of Thiệu: “Thiệu mua nhà mới,” and Minh Hiến, “Bại Sứ Martin Tiết Lộ: Bí Mật Mất Saigon,” *Việt Báo*, No. 10, Dec. 1, 1976.

<sup>52</sup> Political cartoon in *Việt Báo*, No. 10, Dec. 1, 1976, 10.

<sup>53</sup> “Những nghi vấn lịch sử mới nhất về thủ phạm ra lệnh bỏ cao nguyên,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 27, Sep. 4, 1976.

<sup>54</sup> “Quốc Kỳ-Quốc Ca Nào Cho Việt Kiều Lưu Vong,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 12, May 31, 1976.

citizens, “how many times had we stood to attention to bade farewell our friends who had fallen for the homeland and had entered the earth of the motherland and upon their bodies was that last item, more than their parents, their wives and children, that was the national flag of yellow with three red stripes.” The flag and the anthem were the symbols of those sacrifices rather than something that could be solely claimed by a regime. For the contemporary moment, it unified not only the Vietnamese exiles overseas, but also symbolized support for the anticommunist resistance in the homeland.<sup>55</sup>

Such a debate over the symbols that would represent the exilic community magnifies the importance of the Republican past in the psyche of those who had fled. Moreover, signified in this controversy is the state of politics following the collapse of the Republic. The broad disillusionment against former national leaders and the Thiệu administration meant that leadership in the growing Human Rights and Homeland Restoration movements was to be found elsewhere. Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, Nguyễn Cao Kỳ and other high-ranking generals of the former regime, in fact, would eventually seek to form their own “state in exile” *chính phủ lưu vong*, though was met with mediocre response from the diaspora.<sup>56</sup> Leadership in the diaspora was characterized by a political leveling. While former ranks, positions, and statuses were important for signaling legitimacy, they did not exclusively determine exilic leadership. Leadership over the early movements in Vietnamese America would be found amongst middle-tiered former military officers, the priests and reverends, and political activists who, while staunchly anticommunist, had conflictual histories with the former Republican state. The fact that former Republican symbols were reutilized despite diversity within the cohort that comprised early Vietnamese refugee mobilization highlight the hegemonic hold of Republican anticommunism within the emerging community. Furthermore, such debates demonstrate how the characteristics of the exile community was not a historical given. Rather, that community had to be formed and constructed. Part of the equation would lie in how former Republican narratives were deployed in Vietnamese refugee politics.

### *Recasting Narratives*

The explicit aim of the Greater Overseas Alliance was the “extermination of the communists to save the nation and people of Vietnam.” In its first public “resolution,” the organization outlined its operational goals. For the short-term, the organization would seek to establish a “two-way contact” with the resistance in Vietnam while developing broadcasting operations to propagate in support of Homeland Restoration movement. Its longer aims, firstly, entailed establishing diplomatic and international presence to lobby for Homeland Restoration. Secondly, the organization was intent on sending cadres directly back to Indochina to overthrow the communist regime. As stated, the organization would seek to create an “Overseas Legion” that would, first, rally in a “resistance site” (presumably in the vicinity of Indochina or Vietnam), and then, to directly engage in combat operations alongside the resistance in the homeland.<sup>57</sup> This goal for violent overthrow of the communist regime was made explicit for those who sought entry into the organization. The first swearing in of the organization’s “aspirants” in late January

<sup>55</sup> “Đur Âm Về Quốc Kỳ, Quốc Ca,” *Trắng Đen*, No.19, July 7, 1976.

<sup>56</sup> “Một Nhóm cựu tướng và chánh khác xin tiền Nguyễn văn Thiệu ‘cứu quốc’” *Trắng Đen*, No.43-44, Feb. 3, 1978; Chính Tâm, “Nguyễn Văn Thiệu Tái Chính Đòn Hàng Ngũ,” *Việt Nam Hải Ngoại*, No.153, Apr. 30, 1982.

<sup>57</sup> “Liên Minh Hải Ngoại Phục Quốc VN: Nghị Quyết Số 1,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 41, Jan. 13, 1978.

1978 entailed a vow before the ancestral altar and the Republican flag that members are “determined to return to Vietnam to exterminate the dictatorial communists.” Such a vow was depicted as a “sacred duty” *nghĩa vụ thiêng liêng*, requiring the deepest of commitment and sacrifice from its participants.<sup>58</sup>

While the Republican symbolism which pervaded the ceremonies, conferences, and activities of the Greater Overseas Alliance lent the organization a degree of political legitimacy within the eyes of Vietnamese exiles, it was perhaps the casting of the organization as an aspirational military force that allowed the organization to flourish in the way that it did. This vision of direct combat by an “overseas” military contingent was, in part, informed by a number of developments that transpired in late 1977 and throughout 1978. In 1977, Vietnam faced a series of border conflicts with Cambodia. Then under the reign of Pol Pot’s Khmer Rouge, Cambodian incursion into its neighbor territory is partly a product of long-held tensions between Indochinese revolutionary parties. Cambodia, after 1975, sought to utilize these military incursions as “part of a negotiation strategy aimed at convincing the Vietnamese to acknowledge the Kampuchean definition of an acceptable framework for negotiations.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, the victory over American and South Vietnamese forces exacerbated the tensions of the “special relationship” the Vietnamese revolutionaries long had over their Cambodian counterparts. For the Cambodians, this “special relationship” meant Vietnamese hegemony, whereas to the Vietnamese, “it was a statement of self-evident strategic necessity which was vital to the security of all three [Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia] states.”<sup>60</sup>

For the Vietnamese exiles who fled overseas, the unfolding conflicts in Indochina presented opportunity. As early as 1977, Vietnamese refugee attention begin turning towards the brewing conflicts at the Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian borders. A *Trắng Đen* editorial in February shrewdly saw these early border clashes and skirmishes as the pretext to another war in Indochina. As the author writes, “the embers of war in Southeast Asia smolders and only awaits the opportunity to explode.” The editorial view anticommunist resistance activities in Vietnam as part of broader pattern across Southeast Asia. The communist victory in Vietnam had come alongside the victories in Pathet Laos as well as Khmer Rouge. For the author, like in Vietnam, anticommunist forces have mobilized and, too, were engaging in guerrilla activities against the newly formed communist states in Cambodia and Laos. While the Vietnamese and Laotian communist states were closely allied in efforts to suppress anticommunist rebellion, they faced an increasingly aggressive Cambodia led by Pol Pot. Confrontations between these newly formed communist states also reflected the rivalry between China and the Soviet Union that had been transpiring since the 1960s over the direction of the international communist movement. The Khmer Rouge found in China a powerful benefactor while the Soviet Union supported Vietnam through arms importation, as well as economic and technical aid. The brewing conflict between Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam—which eventually boiled over to neighboring Thailand—a political dynamism by which allegiances were made expediently and did not

<sup>58</sup> “Hàng ngàn kiều bào Việt Nam về tham dự lễ tuyên thệ của Liên Đoàn Chí Nguyên,” *Trắng Đen*, No.45, Feb.15, 1978.

<sup>59</sup> David W. P. Elliott, “The Third Indochina Conflict: Introduction” in *The Third Indochina Conflict* ed. David W. P. Elliott (Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1981), 8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

necessarily reflect ideological lines. As implied by the author, these conditions presented the opportunity for new alliances.<sup>61</sup>

As Indochina became increasingly destabilized, exile newspapers depicted a vision of largescale cooperation between Khmer Serei or “Free Khmer” forces, Laotian anticommunists, Montagnard contingents in the Central Highlands, dissident religious sects, and the former South Vietnamese veterans in the homeland.<sup>62</sup> Newspaper reports, for one, played up the successes of not only Vietnamese resistance forces, but also that of other Indochinese forces “resisting” communist rule.<sup>63</sup> For another, reports highlighted instances of successful collaboration between these disparate resistance movements. An early report by *Trắng Đen* in March 1977, for example, point to the successful joint operations between “infantry division 7, division 9, and division 21 of the Republic of Vietnam” and Khmer Serei forces. According to the report, these operations on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border “has brought heavy casualties upon the equipment, provisions and troops of Vietnamese communist forces as well as that of the Cambodians.” These joint operations, furthermore, had “opened the road into the anticommunist battlefield for the people in the Central Highlands,” allowing these contingents to join the resistance. The report claims that the Vietnamese resistance, through aid from Khmer Serei forces, then controlled numerous regions along the contested border region.<sup>64</sup>

As the Vietnamese communists became embroiled in another Indochinese War, Vietnamese anticommunist exiles saw the opportunity to directly act. In a 1978 *Trắng Đen* editorial, Lê Minh Trục—the chief editor of the Greater Overseas Alliance’s biweekly “discussion forum” *Thức Tỉnh*—argues that the growing conflicts in Indochina made it opportune for Vietnamese exiles to act. He writes, “at this time, the Vietnamese as well as the Cambodian people overseas need to strongly act, articulate the suffering of the Vietnamese and Khmer people which faced genocide due to the ignorant activities of the Vietnamese and Cambodian communists, directly and strongly support...[their resistances], and utilize this opportunity to entirely destroy the evil, inhumane communists, Vietnam as well as Cambodian.”<sup>65</sup> In another essay, Lê Minh Trục went further, arguing that these conditions in Indochina would “bring us back to the homeland.” War, according to the author, was coming. Not only is Indochina becoming increasingly destabilized, the “superpowers” of China, America, and the Soviet Union were turning their eyes towards the region. Conflicts between communist states, thus, provided the opportunity for Vietnamese exiles to return and exploit these conditions to successfully overthrow the communist regime. Lê Minh Trục writes: “if we do not prepare

<sup>61</sup> Lê Minh Trục, “Nhận Định: Chiến Tranh CSVN và Khmer Đỏ,” *Trắng Đen*, No.41, Jan. 13, 1978; see also: Anh Huy, “Lịch Sử Thăng Trầm của Dân Tộc Khmer Trên Bán Đảo Đông Dương,” *Trắng Đen*, No.100, Feb. 29, 1978; see also: Nguyễn Quân, “Chiến Tranh Hoa-Việt Đã Mở Màn,” *Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong*, No. 76.

<sup>62</sup> “Kháng Chiến Việt-Lào-Miên Liên Kết Hỗ Trợ Chiến Đấu,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 11, May 23, 1976; “MT Liên Minh Kháng Chiến Cao Đài Đã Được Tái Lập từ 22-8-75,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 12, May 31, 1976; “Cộng Quân Dừng Biên Người và MIG.21 Tấn công kháng chiến Cao Đài tại núi bà đen,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976; “Hiện tình kháng chiến đảng phái—tôn giáo miền nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 15, June 13, 1976.

<sup>63</sup> “Kháng chiến Cam Bốt đánh mạnh tại Đê Thiên Đế Thích,” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 27, 1976; “Những gì đang xảy ra tại Lào quốc ‘Anh Em,’” *Trắng Đen*, No.3, Mar. 27, 1976; “Bên trong mật khu: kháng chiến Cam Bốt Quân số kháng chiến đông hơn quân Khmer Đỏ?” *Trắng Đen*, No. 18, July 1, 1976. See also: “Kháng chiến Kampuchea đặt thêm thắng lợi mới—Hà nội lại giờ thủ đoạn cũ: ly gián hội ASEAN và liên hiệp Kampuchea Dân Chủ,” *Việt Nam Hải Ngoại*, No. 153, Apr. 30, 1982.

<sup>64</sup> “Phối hợp chiến đấu giữa Khmer Tự Do và Phục Quốc Quân VN,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar. 4, 1977.

<sup>65</sup> Lê Minh Trục, “Nhận Định: Say Lầy,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 42, Jan. 20, 1978.



beforehand starting now to return to Vietnam then when the opportunity [thời cơ] presents itself, the Vietnamese traitors of the past, which regularly serve as henchmen for foreign powers, will raise their heads and the people of Vietnam will be pushed into the blade of the imperialists to choose this side or that.” It was the moment for Vietnamese anticommunist nationalists to seize the moment to prevent the return of those “traitors” who once held leadership over the Republic but had abandoned the nation. It was also the opportunity for Vietnam to chart its own destiny, rather than falling into the geopolitical rivalry between the world powers.<sup>66</sup>

While the changes in geopolitics surrounding what would become the Third Indochina War greatly shaped the expectations of Vietnamese exiles, the vision of successful overthrow of the communist regime was also informed by the ingrained Republican anticommunist narratives. Recall that the Geneva Narrative of the Vietnamese Republic had inspired caricatures of Vietnamese communists as brutal, deceptive, and traitorous whose political philosophy lies in total capture of political power and repression of civil dissent. The Greater Overseas Alliance, as well as other Vietnamese exile organizations and the diasporic discussion in general, view the mass exodus of refugees from Vietnam as a direct consequence of communist policies and “atrocities” committed against the populace. Similarly, the “resistance” in Vietnam against communist rule was viewed as a response to draconian policies, deprivation of freedom, and the moral and economic deterioration of the country that was squarely blamed on the Vietnamese communist party.<sup>67</sup>

Since the formative days of Vietnamese America, newspapers like *Trắng Đen* highlighted the deleterious conditions in post-1975 Vietnam, emphasizing economic mismanagement and failures,<sup>68</sup> communist suppression and brutality,<sup>69</sup> cases of immorality and cultural destruction,<sup>70</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Lê Minh Trực, “Chuẩn Bị Về Việt Nam,” *Thực Tình*, No. 2, May 15, 1978.

<sup>67</sup> A different rendition of the Geneva Accords which coincided with the outbreak of the Third Indochina is outlined in the news magazine *Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong*. Here the author points to how the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia is a violation the 1954 Geneva and 1972 Paris Accords. As such, the United States and the United Nations must condemn the Vietnamese communists for these crimes, as well as how they had violated these Accords to destroy the Republic of Vietnam (Hiền Giả, “Chúng tôi đòi Hoa Kỳ đưa vấn đề vi phạm Hiệp Ước Geneve và Ba Lê ra LHQ,” *Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong*, No. 76, 1979).

<sup>68</sup> “Bà Bình lại tuyên bố miền Nam có 3tr. Thất nghiệp,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 3, Mar. 20, 1976; “Hà Nội Bây Giờ ra sao?” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar.13, 1976; “Lá thư đầy nước mắt viết từ quê hương,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar.13, 1976; “Người dân Saigon lột vỏ cây làm củ: Trần Văn Trà bị thay thế vì tham nhũng,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “Quả tượng thuê mà ở Nam VN hiện nay, thuê nông nghiệp có nơi phải đóng 45%,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 45, Jan. 15, 1977; “Đây! Bộ mặt mới lạ của Saigon ngày nay,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 6, Apr. 16, 1976; “Hoa hoạn kỳ lạ ở Khánh Hội, CS đẩy mạnh chiến dịch về vùng kinh tế mới,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 15, June 13, 1976

<sup>69</sup> “Sẽ đánh lớn trong dịp bầu cử QH thống nhất 2 miền VN,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 3, Mar. 20, 1976; “Biên Hòa-Sóc Trăng bị ruộng bỏ dũ dội,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar.13, 1976; “‘Nghị Quyết 24’ với 23 điều của CS, có mục đích: chia dân làm nhiều hạng: A, B, C, D...” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “Các tôn giáo ngậm ngậm phản ứng, nhưng rất quyết liệt: Lễ Giáng Sinh 1976 Từ Saigon tới Hà Nội,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “Những ai chưa tin ở chiến thắng của KCPQQ, hãy nghe đồng bào vượt thoát kẻ: KCPQQ có chiến đóng lãnh thổ hãn hòi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “4 Điều Mới Lạ về Dân Chủ,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 6, Apr. 16, 1976; “Trộn gia đình bị giết ở đường Trương minh giảng,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 7, Apr. 23, 1976; “Đa số người Bắc Di cư 1954 bị đưa ra khỏi Sài Gòn,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar.13, 1976; “Số phận Cao Đại dưới áp chế cộng sản,” *Trắng Đen*, No.11, May 23, 1976; “Thiếu tá Trương Cuội bị sử tử hình tại bến xe Rạch Giá,” *Trắng Đen*, no.17, June 27, 1976;

<sup>70</sup> “Sau ngày 30-4,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar.13, 1976; “Thực hiện đúng lời thề ‘Sinh Bắc, Tử Nam,’ Cán Bộ Bắc Mê Phụ Nữ Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “Cộng sản cho công khai phá thai nạn ly thân ly dị lan tràn khắp miền nam VN,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977; “Cộng Sản Việt nhờ nữ tu pháp giải quyết nạn chị em ta ở SG,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 45, Jan. 15, 1977; “Nhà văn nhà báo sống với CS ra sao?” *Trắng Đen*, No. 45, Jan. 15, 1977; “Cấm

and the conditions of reeducation camps which held former Republican military officers and politicians.<sup>71</sup> Within the Vietnamese exile community, public discussions generated an image of a struggling, repressive, miserable post-war Vietnam within which compatriots, family, friends, and relatives were desperate to escape or radically change.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, *Trắng Đen* occasionally publishes memoirs and letters from their readership. These personalized editorials often tell of harrowing struggles, desperation, and poverty experienced by those “left behind.” One was an apparent letter authored by a law student in Saigon, telling of forced resettlement to an unknown, unfamiliar rural camp for labor following the fall of Saigon. The author writes, as a student,

“they see us the most vile of the [class] categories. This is revenge, and we now see our college professors push rickshaws or fix bicycles [to make a living]. I am without any words, apart that this is the reality of our intellectual class in a communist regime.”<sup>73</sup>

Another letter, drafted by a former resident of Saigon who fled to Thailand, points to the deteriorating conditions and repressive policies in the former Republican capitol. As presented, the once a bustling city filled with activity was now filled with crime and poverty. Economic activities were strictly regulated, so much that “whenever we want to spend, we must fill out a formal request and whether we can or not is up to them [the communist officials.” Rice and food products, according to the author, were in shortage: “to buy rice we have to stand in long lines at government stores and must bring our family registration.” Residents had to attend weekly “meetings...to hear them [the communists] curse American and Thiệu,” and every home “had to hang the banner ‘Nothing is Greater than Independence and Freedom.’” People had to sell off their housewares to have enough to eat, and any form of travel necessitated governmental approval and forms.<sup>74</sup>

A republished letter by a former non-commissioned officer in the South Vietnamese navy tells of conditions following the fall of Saigon. “The communists,” the author writes, “told us that reeducation classes would last for 3 days for soldiers and non-commissioned officers, and whoever in which ward would go in accordance with their ward.” However, the author argues that his compatriots were still not yet home after weeks and days, and “only after 3, 4 months later that their families are given notice.” Those kept in reeducation camps “dared not say

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đọc sách cấm nghe nhạc xuất bản ở miền nam trước ngày 30-4,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 7, Apr. 23, 1976; “Đức Mẹ làm phép lạ ở Fatima Bình Lợi?” *Trắng Đen*, No. 15, June 13, 1976; “Giáo sư Nguyễn Đăng thực đang bị CS cô lập và bỏ đói,” *Trắng Đen*, no.17, June 27, 1976; “Sanh hoạt của giới trí thức còn kẹt lại ở nam Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 18, July 1, 1976; “5 đại học Vạn Hạnh—Hòa Hảo—Cao Đài—Minh Đức... Bị Giải Tán,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 22, Aug. 3, 1976; “Cộng sản bắt giam nhiều nhà tu,” *Trắng Đen*, No.5, Apr.8, 1977.

<sup>71</sup> “Báo chí Anh viết về VN: Nhiều sĩ quan chết tại các trại học tập,” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Mar. 6, 1976; “CS tàn sát đoàn người đi học tập ở Tây Ninh,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 45, Jan. 15, 1977; “1 triệu người ‘chế độ cũ’ chưa được trở về gia đình,” *Trắng Đen*, no. 10, May 15, 1976; “Sự thật về ‘đầu tở’ các vụ ‘tự tử’ ở Saigon và những người ‘đi không về’ ở miền nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.11, May 23, 1976; “Hành hạ các giám mục công giáo tại Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.12, May 31, 1976; “Đề tài học tập ở các trại cải tạo,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976; “2 cuộc biểu tình ‘đòi chồng’ của vợ sĩ quan công chức cũ: đây sự thật về các Trại ‘Cải Tạo Tư Tưởng’ ở miền Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976; “500 cựu sĩ quan Cộng Hòa Việt Nam bị giết tập thể tại trại ‘cải tạo’ ở Long Khánh,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 16, June 19, 1976; “Tôi Đi Học Tập ‘Cải Tạo Tư Tưởng,’” *Trắng Đen*, no.17, June 27, 1976; “Tôi theo học lớp cải tạo tư tưởng: Cuộc thảo luận sôi nổi về ‘đế quốc và xã hội chủ nghĩa,’” *Trắng Đen*, No. 18, July 1, 1976;

<sup>72</sup> See also: “Tin Nam Việt, Đời Sống Saigon: Rất Khó Khăn,” *Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong*, No. 2, Feb. 15, 1976.

<sup>73</sup> “Lá thư đầy nước mắt, viết từ quê hương,” *Trắng Đen*, No.1, Mar. 6, 1976.

<sup>74</sup> “Lá thư đầy nước mắt, viết từ quê hương,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar.13, 1976

anything but that reeducation was good, labor is good.” Family members of those who had “crimes against the fatherland and the people” were harassed and demonized, like the author’s mother. To pay, family members had to labor for 3 months, “meaning working in the fields...entirely work that were hard and heavy, and my mother is old, she does not have the strength to endure, so she went home to sell pineapples and plums in front of the opera house...to get through the day.” Everyone was poor, claimed the author, “our entire ward is only getting by, every household just goes out into the streets to sell one thing or another, only the [communist] soldiers have money to spend.” The Saigon that the author once knew, one of “happiness, youth, and freedom,” is now strangled within which neighbors fear and suspect one another, “we fear to smile and laugh, fear to speak, silent as ghosts.” Without human compassion as under a communist society, “the moral soul of a person now is being forged into steel.”<sup>75</sup>

While personalized stories such as the above undoubtedly reflected the lived realities of many Vietnamese refugees, they were also promoted by news organs, exile organizations, and are deeply reflective of the anticommunist discourse of the Republican era. Emphases on these experiential components of post-war Vietnam were not accidental nor politically neutral; rather, they were selected and presented in manners, through language, and with terminologies which were familiar to those who were once citizens of the Republic and appealed to those who had been dislocated from their homeland. *Trắng Đen*, in one edition, requested that its readership submit “witness testimonies and materials condemning the atrocities of the communists,” particularly relating to reeducation camps or forced relocation. According to the advertisement, those who receive notice or information about the conditions of loved ones must “bravely come forward and serve as witnesses for the Movement to Fight for Human Rights in Vietnam.”<sup>76</sup> As the editorials, letters, memoirs and reports cited above demonstrate, castigating communists and public testimony of their “atrocities” remained central to post-1975 political conversations. These depictions are ideologically extended to explain, interpret, and present the journeys that refugees endured as one of “escape” and “flight” from the expected and lived horrors of communist rule.

One report, for example, tells of a former military pilot who “escaped ‘the communist prison’ by stealing a helicopter to fly himself and his family to Thailand to seek asylum.”<sup>77</sup> Another report narrates how 28 Vietnamese of Chinese descent, of which 13 were children, “escaped across the bamboo curtain” on a fishing boat. This “flock of ‘birds fleeing communism’” moved from port to port of the Malaysian isle, unable to acquire permission to dock, but were provided some charity from locals who “compassionate enough to bring them provisions.”<sup>78</sup> Beyond the bureaucratic barriers facing those who actually reached countries of first asylum, reports, editorials, and memoirs also narrate obstacles facing refugees on the seas, from communist coast guards, crowded conditions, lack of provisions, to being stranded or hunted by Khmer Rouge and pirates in the South China Seas.<sup>79</sup> As retold in these stories, the

<sup>75</sup> Phan Trần Mai, “Việt Nam sau ngày đổi chủ,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 8, Apr. 30, 1976.

<sup>76</sup> “Cần Nhân Chứng Sống và Tài Liệu Tố Cáo Tội Ác CS,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977.

<sup>77</sup> “1 cựu TU phi công cướp máy bay chở gia đình qua Thái xin tị nạn,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 3, Mar. 20, 1976.

<sup>78</sup> “28 người Việt gốc Hoa vượt thoát bức màn tre,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 8, Apr. 30, 1976

<sup>79</sup> “18 tháng 6 thêm 35 người Việt tị nạn vừa trốn thoát tới Brunei Singapore,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976; “Nhiều tàu vượt biển tị nạn bị tàu khmer đỏ bắn chìm,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 8, Apr. 30, 1976; “Thêm 17 đồng bào rời bỏ thiên đường cộng sản đến tị nạn tại Phi Luật Tân,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976; “Không chịu nổi cộng sản, 54 người Việt vượt đại dương,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 15, Jan 13, 1976; “Không thể sống với cộng sản: một nhóm chuyên

refugees knowingly confront such harrowing journeys because “after a period of tasting communism,” those who fled were “determined to leave the country or die in the process rather than live with the communists.”<sup>80</sup>

The evocative image below encapsulates the post-1975 exile narrative which interprets Vietnamese “flight” as the logical response to the brutality of communist rule. As demonstrated in the photograph, entire families, with ages ranging from grandmothers to young children, are boarded onto fishing boats. As the caption reads, “Those who left their homeland face and accept the immeasurable hardships and danger in hopes of finding freedom.” But “those who remain,” the caption continues, “endure wretchedness in every facet of life.”<sup>81</sup>



For the Vietnamese who had left their homeland, the Republican anticommunist discourse re-narrated through newspaper reports, memoirs, editorials, political tracts, and other forms of community publications spoke to something very real, emotional, and personal. Many had loved ones, families, and friends still residing in Vietnam or stranded in refugee camps across the Pacific. A number were separated from their relatives, some were alone in a new land, and a great many were desperate to find and reconnect with their families. Indeed, *Trắng Đen* ran a regular column towards the end of each edition entitled “Finding Relatives,” which publishes contact information for those refugees attempting to locate loved ones at no cost for submission. Each edition entailed several pages of aunt, uncles, parents, and children, some seeking to find news about specific individuals, other seeking to contact “any relatives or friends.” Former military men listed their rank and division to connect with those they once served with. Civilians provided their residential address in South Vietnam in search of former neighbors and local acquaintances.

viên đã tới phi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 16, June 19, 1976; “90 người vượt thoát khỏi miền Nam cướp chiếm tàu CS gần Côn Sơn,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 18, July 1, 1976;

<sup>80</sup> “Giới trí thức nam Việt Nam tổ chức vượt tuyến sông nôi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 13, June 1, 1976.

<sup>81</sup> *Trắng Đen*, No. 9, May 11, 1976, 9.

Within the context of mass displacement, Republican anticommunism provided a general discourse that Vietnamese refugees drew upon to interpret their reality. As something once prevalent and hegemonic in South Vietnam, it was a discourse that was familiar in its language, representations, and terminologies. It entailed narratives that, as former citizens of the Republic, Vietnamese refugees had long heard and knew—and for many, aspects of the Republican anticommunist narratives were internalized and taken as truth. As such, Republican anticommunism allowed for an “imagined community” of a sort to emerge, within which one’s own challenges and tribulations can be seen as parallel to the experiences of others. Through newspapers such as *Trắng Đen* and proclamations espoused Homeland Restoration organizations, Vietnamese refugees are able to “imagine” the existence of other Vietnamese people who had endured as refugees, sharing in that “homogenous, empty” time-space of a displaced and exiled “nation.”<sup>82</sup> The dislocation and separation from friends, family, relatives and homeland made it necessary that the Vietnamese refugees rely on something collective and shared to rebuild a semblance of community. Republican anticommunism, in the post-1975 moment, served this purpose, becoming the ideological cornerstone of Vietnamese exiles overseas. It was something that was familiar, something that was unifying, something that provided meaning and sense—Republican anticommunism gave the refugees the building blocks of a collective identity.

While many within the community believed that their exile was but a temporary one,<sup>83</sup> Vietnamese refugees mobilized for expanded protection, greater social assistance, and lobbied to allow more of their compatriots into the United States. In doing so, the Vietnamese articulated and asserted their status as *anticommunist* refugees, attempting to validate their own place in American society. Phuong Tran Nguyen called this process “refugee nationalism, an exile identity confident in its legitimacy because of support from the West despite lacking a state of its own.” For Nguyen, this Vietnamese refugee nationalism represented an avenue of “becoming American—becoming Refugee American” which mobilized discourse and politics that centered on “American guilt” (in loss of the war and abandonment of its allies) and “refugee gratitude” (for being rescued in desperate escape from a communist regime). Nguyen terms this the “politics of rescue” which provided Vietnamese refugees “a potentially strong moral claim to admission and belonging,” while simultaneously providing the means for the United States to retrieve its international image and reputation following its defeat in the Vietnam War. Within the context of language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, racism, and economic challenges facing the Vietnamese in exile, the mobilization of “refugee nationalism” provided a space to articulate American belonging and validate the Vietnamese presence in the United States.

As Lê Xuân Khoa argued before the US Congress in 1988, the Vietnamese were “bona fide refugees that deserve protection and care.” They fled an “oppressive” communist regime that, if “caught by the Vietnamese authorities...[would] not only had just their properties confiscated but then they are also deprived of all basic rights,” or, in the case of former political prisoners, would be executed. Without rescue and assistance for fleeing refugees, the fear was “that among dead or among those yet-to-be-killed” would be one’s own family, relatives, or

<sup>82</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

<sup>83</sup> For example, a myth propagated through *Trắng Đen* was mysterious prophecy that Vietnamese refugees would be able to return home in 1981 or 1982 (“Một lời tiên tri từ 1938: Người Việt sẽ hồi hương 1982,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 25, Aug. 23, 1976; Hòa Thượng Tuệ Quang, “Những lời tiên tri về số phận miền nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No.2, Mar. 4, 1977; Hoàn Nguyên, “Những lời tiên tri về số phận miền nam,” No. 4, Mar. 25, 1977;

loved ones.<sup>84</sup> The depiction of the Vietnamese as deserving refugees melded into a host of policy issues from resettling former reeducation camp prisoners through the Orderly Departure Program, to addressing piracy faced by refugees on the Gulf of Thailand, and to pressuring the UNHRC and first asylum countries for more lenient screening processes on the basis of religious and political persecution.<sup>85</sup> These depictions, however, existed within a context of how Vietnamese refugees represented the post-war conditions of the homeland, the “brutality” and “oppression” of communist rule, and the rationale behind the exodus. As such, the arguments that Vietnamese refugees presented before both the American public and the international community around issues of human rights, refugee protection, and Vietnamese “deservingness” built on the reconfiguration of Republican anticommunism demonstrated above.

Such a narrative of communist atrocities was integrated into how the Greater Overseas Alliance interpreted their own role in the anticommunist struggle and the viability of Homeland Restoration. In an editorial in June 1978, Lê Minh Trục argued that communist rule had produced but two possible responses on the part of the Vietnamese people. The first was to “find any means to escape to foreign countries, holding hearts of resentment against the Vietnamese communists.” The other was to remain in the homeland, “supporting and aiding” the resistance. As such, “revolution inevitably will erupt,” because the “stifling...dictatorial, bloodthirstiness [of the communists] will feed the fire of resentment amongst the populace, increasingly forcing the people to save themselves, to fight, to participate in the Revolution to topple the puppet state of the Vietnamese communists.”<sup>86</sup> If Republican citizens mobilized around a collective discourse of “resentment” resulting from “communist atrocities” during the Republican era, that same discourse survived to establish the political impetus behind the Homeland Restoration movement.

“Resentment,” according to the editor of *Thức Tỉnh*, was something that must be “simmered” *nung nấu*. Vietnamese exiles must come to realize and embrace that “humiliation...resentment, sorrow” of their defeat and loss of nation and transform that “resentment” into “action to restore the homeland.” Homeland Restoration was the extension of the longer history of Vietnam’s anticommunist struggle and the country’s resistance against foreign domination and rule. Homeland Restoration meant not being satisfied with one’s safety and security for having made it to the countries of the West. It meant a perpetual view towards

<sup>84</sup> “The Crisis Facing Vietnamese Refugees Seeking Asylum in Thailand: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs House of Representatives One Hundredth Congress, Second Session,” Feb. 24, 1988, 56-61.

<sup>85</sup> Indochinese refugee voices on these issues presented before US Congress: “Human Rights in Vietnam: Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives Ninety-Fifth Congress, First Session,” June 16, 21, and July 26, 1977, 73-167; “Piracy in the Gulf of Thailand: A Crisis for the International Community: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives Ninety-Seventh Congress, Second Session,” Apr. 29, 1982, 15-23; “Indochinese Refugees at Risk: the Boat People, Cambodians under Khmer Rouge Control, and Re-education-camp Detainees: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Foreign Affairs House of Representative One Hundred First Congress, First Session,” Feb. 8, 1983, 50-56, 67-70; “Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Asylum Seekers: Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session,” July 27, 1995, 30-49, 62-70, 136-163; “Human Rights in Vietnam: Joint Hearing before the Subcommittees on Asian and the Pacific and International Operations and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations House of Representatives One Hundred Fourth Congress, First Session,” Nov. 8, 1995, 30-60.

<sup>86</sup> Lê Minh Trục, “Dân Tộc VN Nhất Định Thắng Cộng Sản,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No.3, June 1, 1978.

the homeland, concern about that homeland, and the commitment to act in order to save it from communist rule. It was the truest expression of Vietnamese identity and national loyalty.<sup>87</sup> For the editor, it was a movement which drew upon “the experience of a war that has stretched 30 years,” a war to prevent communist domination in Southeast Asia. As such, the Vietnamese who fled overseas cannot simply accept their host country as their “homeland,” but must turn to the actual homeland that they had left behind.<sup>88</sup>

If communist brutality and failed economic policies had forced the Vietnamese refugees to flee the homeland en masse, communist military aggression had produced the destabilizing conditions that then characterized Indochina. Recall that the discussion in Chapter 3 has highlighted “military aggression” as one of the dominant themes of the Republican Geneva Narrative. In the post-1975 era, similar renditions of “communist aggression” were redeployed by Vietnamese exiles to interpret the outbreak of the Third Indochina War. A July editorial in *Thức Tỉnh* makes this explicit argument. According to the author, communists could only survive within the context of war and destruction. As those who are “singularly concerned with...holding power and authority,” the communists deploy war to “expand power externally and reinforce authority within.” War is utilized by the communists during moments of discord and weakness within its own ranks. Such had been the case in the war against South Vietnam, and is now the case against its neighbors in Indochina.<sup>89</sup> For Vietnamese exiles, the border conflicts and military mobilization by the Vietnamese communists could only be interpreted as an attempt to reinforce their own powers within not only Indochina, but within the vicinity itself. Given the rise of resistance activities, “the general offensive Cambodia is to squash the [internal] resistance in its entirety.”<sup>90</sup>

The shared discursive basis upon which Vietnamese exiles articulated the refugee experience and the desire for Homeland Restoration dovetail into how they framed issues of Human Rights violation in Vietnam. Here, again, the Greater Overseas Alliance serves a primary example. Most notably, Đỗ Thanh Hà—the priest who was at the forefront of early Human Rights mobilization in Vietnamese America—was closely affiliated with the organization, participating in numerous political events sponsored by the Greater Overseas Alliance. Thus, while the organization was devoted to the violent overthrow of the Vietnamese communist regime, it also played a vital role in advocating for and spreading Human Rights mobilization across Vietnamese exile communities. Đỗ Thanh Hà was regularly featured in *Thức Tỉnh*'s sections. The forum, for example, detailed his orchestration of commemorative activities for the third anniversary of the fall of Saigon in Santa Ana,<sup>91</sup> broadcasted his conference to mark the 1978 Human Rights Day,<sup>92</sup> and republished his letter to the US Senate calling for a cessation to diplomatic talks until human rights are “restored to the people of Vietnam.”<sup>93</sup> Alongside coverage of mobilization by closely affiliated activists in the United States, the Greater Overseas Alliance also reported on a litany of human rights activism amongst exile communities

<sup>87</sup> Lê Minh Trục, “30.4.1978 Ngày Phục Quốc,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 1, Apr. 30, 1978.

<sup>88</sup> Lê Minh Trục, “Dân Tộc VN Nhất Định Thắng Cộng Sản,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No.3, June 1, 1978.

<sup>89</sup> Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Lê Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 5, July 1, 1978.

<sup>90</sup> Trần Văn Sơn, “Vấn Đề Trung Lập Hóa VN,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 5, July 1, 1978.

<sup>91</sup> “30.4.78 Tại Khắp Nơi,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 2, May 15, 1978.

<sup>92</sup> “Thông Báo: Ngày Quốc Tế Nhân Quyền tại California,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 13, Nov. 5, 1978; “Cộng Đòng VN Tị Nạn Khắp Thế Giới biểu tình đòi nhân quyền ở Việt Nam,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 16, Dec. 20, 1978.

<sup>93</sup> Đỗ Thanh Hà, “Thơ Ngô,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 12, Oct. 20, 1978.

worldwide, often through chapter members already on the ground. *Thức Tỉnh* covered, for example, the hunger strike of Đại Đức Trí Hiền, a Buddhist leader in Japan. With reports sent in by Greater Overseas Alliance cadres based in Tokyo, the organ painted an image of an elderly monk stubbornly sitting cross-legged before the Vietnamese Embassy “demanding Phan Hiền [the Vietnamese Ambassador] to come out for dialogue.” The monk vowed to refuse to budge and engage in an “indefinite hunger strike...[to] condemn the destruction of religion and human rights in Vietnam.” The forum published the residential address of the monk in Tokyo, encouraging its readers to send in letters of support.<sup>94</sup>

Discursively, the Greater Overseas Alliance’s interpretation of human rights issues reflected the broader discourse circulating in Vietnamese exile communities. Like *Trắng Đen*, political content in *Thức Tỉnh* was replete with analysis, discussion, and reporting of various “communist atrocities” and the detrimental consequences of communist rule. Like the broader exilic discourse, *Thức Tỉnh* engaged in denouncing communism and the activities of the Vietnamese Communist Party, and, in at least one editorial, called upon the exile community to provide “lived testimony and evidence” to aid in the struggle for human rights.<sup>95</sup> One article, for example, pointed to the expropriation of property, corruption, and forced military service to fight in the border conflicts with Cambodia.<sup>96</sup> In another, forced relocation of the Saigonese population into “New Economic Zones” were detailed, depicting this once vibrant metropolis as now “a city of death, without commercial activities.”<sup>97</sup> So prevalent were these examples in public discussions that *Thức Tỉnh*, in one issue, began its opening editorial by stating that one needed not “waste time repeating communist atrocities...because we believe that you know and know clearly and explicitly what is happening to our compatriots” since the communist victory.<sup>98</sup>

With such “evidence” in the discursive background, *Thức Tỉnh* framed human rights activism as a necessity and moral duty of Vietnamese exiles overseas. As something with “moral,” and even “spiritual,” significance, this duty that Vietnamese exiles have towards the struggle for human rights was, in part, informed by lingering influences of Personalism in discussion of human rights. An open letter sent by the Greater Overseas Alliance to “Leaders of the Nations in the Free World” and the United Nations points to how Republican anticommunism became redeployed in Vietnamese exilic politics, and how Personalist aspects are interwoven into how Vietnamese exiles represented the issue of human rights.<sup>99</sup>

Arguing against the prospect of normalization and economic assistance to Vietnam, the letter begins with a depiction of recent attempts by the SRV to establish diplomatic ties with Southeast Asian countries and the West as a pathetic and desperate ventures in hopes of staving off a total collapse of the state. Representing the Greater Overseas Alliance, its General Commissioner Vi Nhân writes, “Humiliated, they [the communists] are begging for diplomatic with the United States...to save the communist regim [sic] which is sinking.” Economic assistance to Vietnam would mean the survival of the communist state, which would result in the “exterminat[ion of] all non-communist elements” within Vietnam. Allowing the Vietnamese

<sup>94</sup> “Đại Đức Trí Hiền Tuyệt Thực Vô Hạn Định,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 11, Oct. 1, 1978.

<sup>95</sup> Huỳnh Minh Đạo, “Bước Đường Cùng Của Tập Đoàn CS Hà Nội,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 6, July 15, 1978.

<sup>96</sup> “Tin Quê Hương Việt Nam,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No.1, Apr. 30, 1978.

<sup>97</sup> “Nam Đi Kinh Tế Mới, Bắc Đi Đồi Tiên,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 4, June 15, 1978.

<sup>98</sup> “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 7, Aug. 1, 1978.

<sup>99</sup> “A Letter from the Greater Overseas Alliance for National Restoration of Vietnam,” No. 7, *Thức Tỉnh*, Aug. 1, 1978



communists to participate in negotiations would mean the eventual spread of communism throughout the rest of Southeast Asia. The letter called upon its readers to “remember Geneva in 1954 and Paris in 1973, and all other agreements with communists all over the world,” and the communist “treachery” in violating these agreements. World leaders, the letter argued, must “not let such things happen again” by catering to the requests of the communists for assistance and diplomatic relations.<sup>100</sup>

In its closing, the letter highlighted the moral mission of the Greater Overseas Alliance. According to Vi Nhân, the organization did not seek “political ambitions,” but rather aspire to the ideal that “human conscience still can distinguish Good and Bad, Right and Wrong so that we can live like human beings, preserve our human dignity in a just and peaceful world.” That, according to the author, was the reason for which the Vietnamese people struggled. Such a conclusion, on the one hand, points to the organization’s desire to “awaken the conscience of humanity” to the crimes of communism, and, on the other hand, implicitly referenced embedded notions of human value and “personhood” in Republican anticommunism that derived from Personalist philosophy.<sup>101</sup> A different *Thức Tỉnh* editorial in July argues that, with the collapse of the communist regime, what must be reconstructed is not a repeat of the Second Republic, but rather a nation that “takes the person as the basis, a free person in a democratic and peaceful society.”<sup>102</sup> In another editorial in September, Vi Nhân points out that the reason why the Vietnamese people oppose communism was for the chance to “be a human being.”<sup>103</sup> And in another piece, Vi Nhân points to need to move beyond viewing human rights as an “individual” issue, but rather one that must address the “position of human beings within a society” *vị trí con người trong xã hội*, reconjuring that Personalist notion which situates citizens as those with responsibilities towards the broader and overlapping collectives of family, community, and nation.<sup>104</sup> These depictions are aligned with the broader Republican Personalist critique which views communism as “inhumane,” devoid of religion, family, and ancestry, and whose “materialism” *duy vật*, treats human beings as no more than labor value. As such, the anticommunism to which the Vietnamese refugees subscribe is rooted within “our hearts, our subconscious,” the “spirit,” rather than some competition “over material rewards.”<sup>105</sup> It is little wonder that excerpts from the speech delivered by the Russian dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn at the 1978 Harvard commencement were translated and reproduced upon the pages of *Thức Tỉnh*. Highlighted were those sections in which Solzhenitsyn appealed to a higher moral consciousness in his discussion of spirituality, human dignity, development, and human rights.<sup>106</sup>

Personalist concepts were also integrated into how certain Vietnamese exiles interpreted the Homeland Restoration movement. Lê Duy Việt’s lengthy political tract “Doctrine for National Restoration” *Chủ Thuyết Phục Quốc*—published across three issues in *Trắng Đen*—

<sup>100</sup> “A Letter from the Greater Overseas Alliance for National Restoration of Vietnam,” No. 7, *Thức Tỉnh*, Aug. 1, 1978

<sup>101</sup> “A Letter from the Greater Overseas Alliance for National Restoration of Vietnam,” No. 7, *Thức Tỉnh*, Aug. 1, 1978; Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 10, Sept. 15, 1978.

<sup>102</sup> Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 5, July 1, 1978

<sup>103</sup> Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 10, Sept. 15, 1978.

<sup>104</sup> Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 15, Dec. 5, 1978.

<sup>105</sup> “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 12, Oct. 20, 1978

<sup>106</sup> Trần Văn Sơn (trns), “Mỹ Quốc Trước Nguy Cơ Đe Dọa của Cộng Sản,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 10, Sept. 15, 1978; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “A World Split Apart,” June 8, 1978, <<https://www.solzhenitsyncenter.org/a-world-split-apart>>.

distilled the philosophy behind the movement. The crux of this essay is the familiar argument that the “spirit” and “ideal” of nationalism will inevitably supersede the “materialist” class warfare of communism. The specific view of nationalism articulated in the essay was one which conjoins conception of personhood and a citizen’s role in the nation with a call to action to “support the resistance” as the most “sacred” *thiên liêng* national duty. For the author, the egregious conditions since the communist victory necessitate that those who had fled abroad to move beyond their “fear” of communism and retrieve that “courage” to act, to resist, and to fight for the restoration of not only the nation, but the Vietnamese people itself. Communist victory, as depicted, meant not only the loss of country, but the loss of that essence of humanity and sense of collectivity that comprised a nation.<sup>107</sup>

As such, a “doctrine to guide homeland restoration cannot lack a humanistic [nhân bản], personalist [nhân vị], human rights [nhân quyền] standpoint; it cannot lack a sacred notion of the Fatherland.” While “military strength” is necessary for the restoration of the homeland, it is not enough. Rather, “that force must be forged through an enlightened foundation of dialectics between Lifeism [duy sinh] and the surpassing of class status.” Achieving this “foundation” requires that the “homeland restoration doctrine” must be informed by the total appraisal of human relationships: between “the person and the family, the person and the society, the person with the nation and compatriots, with the race and humanity, and the role of the state with its populace.” This appraisal meant that those Vietnamese residing overseas must view their own achievements and sufferings as entwined with those in the homeland. As such, Vietnamese refugees cannot understand themselves as individuals in the manner associated with Western political philosophy, nor as just economic classes in perpetual struggle; they must see themselves as belonging to that “sacred” collective whose duties and sympathies remain grounded to the Fatherland.<sup>108</sup> A second essay by Lê Duy Việt deployed these philosophical points to call for a creation of “patriotic movement” overseas, within which “cadres” would be formed and instilled with the “philosophy of the People and the Fatherland.” For Lê Duy Việt, it was these “cadres” who would constitute the “Overseas Legion” that would return to the homeland to fight alongside resistance forces. These “cadres” would be properly appraised of their “sacred” mission, understand the importance of “spiritualism” *duy linh* and “Lifeism” in the concept of the Fatherland, and, thus, will be properly guided in their fight to restore the nation.<sup>109</sup>

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The late 1970s was a crucial period for Vietnamese refugees who fled overseas. Those years marked the beginnings of the community’s formation. It was during these years that the political movements for Human Rights and Homeland Restoration emerged, and these movements would eventually dominate the politics of Vietnamese America. While these movements responded to contemporary challenges, opportunities, and developments in both the United States and Indochina, these movements were also heavily informed by the Republican anticommunist discourse that Vietnamese refugees brought with them from the homeland.

<sup>107</sup> Lê Duy Việt, “Chủ Thuyết PQ,” *Trắng Đen*, No.44, 47, and 48, Jan. 8, 21, and 28, 1977.

<sup>108</sup> Lê Duy Việt, “Chủ Thuyết PQ,” *Trắng Đen*, No.44, 47, and 48, Jan. 8, 21, and 28, 1977.

<sup>109</sup> Lê Duy Việt, “Vấn Đề Hôm Nay: Nuôi Dưỡng và Phát Triển Một Phong Trào Yêu Nước,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 1, 2, 3 and 4, Feb.24-Mar.25, 1977.

Republican anticommunism aided in how Vietnamese exile organizations articulated and framed their support for the “resistance” in the homeland and their mobilizing efforts to “restore the nation.” As a discourse, Republican anticommunism was also redeployed to narrate the adversities of the refugee journey, describe Vietnamese suffering related to the loss of the homeland, condemn the consequences from communist rule, and advocate for human rights in Vietnam. Republican anticommunism, thus, operated as that collective framework around which Vietnamese exiles made meaning of their circumstances and inspired their fellow “compatriots” into political action.

Yet, the mobilization around these movements did more than reconstitute Republican anticommunism as a collective discourse in Vietnamese exile communities. It also aided in the formation of new organizations, initiated cultural activities, and instituted commemorations and holidays within nascent communities overseas. Below, this chapter turns to how Vietnamese America as a community was formed, and the role that Homeland Restoration and Human Rights played in generating collective activities and participation. At its crux, these movements aided in the rearticulation and reestablishment of a “Nationalist” identity overseas. Indeed, the cause of Homeland Restoration and Human Rights were conceived by exiles as quintessential representations of “Vietnameseness.” Efforts to promote usage of the Vietnamese language, theatrical and musical production, and celebration of Vietnamese culture and heritage were, too, informed by Republican anticommunism and were aided by mobilization around these two movements. In conjunction generating the cultural life in early Vietnamese America, Republican anticommunism was further deployed to set the boundaries between those Vietnamese who belonged within the community and those who did not. Here, the Republican anticommunist narrative of Anti-Neutrality—denoting “resoluteness” and adamancy against communist sympathizers and propaganda—finds its overseas application. Anticommunist activist groups, like the Greater Overseas Alliance, took pains to police the politics, culture, and organizations within the community.

### *Community Formation*

*Trắng Đen*'s “Vietnamese Refugee Activities” *Sanh hoạt của người tị nạn* section from 1976-1979 details the plethora of organizations that emerged in early Vietnamese America. A great number of these organizations operated locally, focusing on providing refugee assistance and resettlement information for Vietnamese populations residing in specific states, counties, or locales. The resettlement strategy of the US government had been to place newly arrived Indochinese refugees in dispersed location to encourage assimilation and prevent the formation of isolated ethnic enclaves. Overtime, however, many Vietnamese refugees migrated from mid-Western states to the West, South, and East of the United States, with the largest concentrations in California and Texas. Thus, one of the earliest Vietnamese American organizations to be established was in Des Moines, Iowa—a location rarely associated with Vietnamese America today.<sup>110</sup> This organization, similar to a number of other early Vietnamese refugee collectives in Minnesota, Delaware, Michigan, and Pennsylvania—as well as more the more well-known communities of California, Louisiana, Colorado, Washington state, Virginia, and Washington, DC—sought to provide mutual assistance for refugees, establish local connection, offer

<sup>110</sup> Ngọc hòa Phương, “Sanh Hoạt của Người Việt Tị Nạn: Thành Lập hội ái hữu VN tại des moines,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 2, Mar. 13, 1976.

information on job opportunities and occupational training, and, overall, aid in resettlement and transition.<sup>111</sup> As the chairman of the Colorado Vietnamese Organization stated in an open letter to his community, “with common circumstances, common worries and anxieties, we need each other, we need to come together in an organization, like under the roof of a family, to collectively resolve all issues and relay to one another the affections of compatriots.”<sup>112</sup> In a new land, facing innumerable unknowns and unfamiliarity, these early organizations laid the foundations for community and belonging in what would become Vietnamese America.

A number of these organizations benefitted, in part, by the participation of South Vietnamese musicians, artists, and other cultural producers who fled overseas. A Vietnamese refugee “mobilizing committee,” for example, held the meet-and-greet events in November 1975 with the help of these refugee cultural producers, replete with “food and theatre” for the Vietnamese residents of Washington, DC.<sup>113</sup> Communal events surrounding traditional Vietnamese holidays such as the Mid-Autumn festival, the Hung Kings, the Lunar New Years, as well as commemorative events marking the fall of Saigon and the former Republic’s “Armed Forces Day” aided in bringing Vietnamese refugees together. These events often entailed cultural performances, music, theatre, art, food, and the like. Designed around commonly accepted themes and representations of Vietnamese culture, these events were, on the one hand, opportunities to reinforce Vietnamese identity and the notion of a common Vietnamese culture, and, on the other hand, means to reconstruct aspects of the former Republican society. Within the first several years of their exile, Vietnamese refugees had established a “Cultural Center” in Glendale,<sup>114</sup> were watching Vietnamese-language television on channel 22 in California,<sup>115</sup> listening to Vietnamese-language programming on WEVL in Memphis,<sup>116</sup> had attended performances at the “Saigon Club” in Hollywood and at Maxim Restaurant in Los Angeles,<sup>117</sup> released cassette tapes reproducing South Vietnamese music,<sup>118</sup> and watched public screenings of the popular 1971 South Vietnamese film “Chân Trời Tím” [Purple Horizon].<sup>119</sup>

While resettlement necessities and cultural reconstruction marked the very earliest of Vietnamese American community formation, Vietnamese refugee organizations also frequently reflected sub-national sources of identifications and many organizations also relied on individuals with established reputation and statuses for leadership. Vietnamese Catholic and Buddhist congregations, for example, were often led by leaders who began their ministerial

<sup>111</sup> E.g., providing information for resettlement: “Đại hội cung cấp tin tức cho tị nạn đông dương,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 2, Mar. 13, 1976; job training: “Hai Đề nghị thiết thực của hội người Việt Colorado,” *Trắng Đen*, Apr. 30, 1976; and mutual assistance: “Hội thân hữu Việt Kiều thành hình tại Pittsburgh,” and “Tình Việt Nam Ruột thịt ở Newark-Delaware” *Trắng Đen*, No. 9, May 11, 1976.

<sup>112</sup> “Hội Người Việt Colorado,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 7, Apr. 23, 1976.

<sup>113</sup> “Việt kiều thủ đô Mỹ đã và đang làm gì?” *Trắng Đen*, No. 3, Mar. 27, 1976; “Văn Nghệ Đoàn,” No. 5, Apr. 9, 1976.

<sup>114</sup> “Đã Lập Xong Thành Phần Hội Đồng Quản Trị Việt Nam Trung Tâm Nghệ Thuật,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 33, Oct. 16, 1976; “Quyết Nghị của Ban Sáng Lập Trung Tâm Nghệ Thuật Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 34, Oct. 23, 1976.

<sup>115</sup> Ngọc Hoài Phương, “Đi và Sống Với Đồng Hương HN: TIVI: Chương Trình VN Trên Đài số 22,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 101, Mar. 7, 1978.

<sup>116</sup> Ngọc Hoài Phương, “Sanh hoạt của người Việt tị nạn: Chương Trình Việt ngữ trên đài WEVL,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 37, Nov. 12, 1976.

<sup>117</sup> Ngọc Hoài Phương, “Sanh hoạt của người Việt tị nạn: Saigon Club,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 37, Nov. 12, 1976; “Tin Di Tân,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 21, July 27, 1976.

<sup>118</sup> “30 Tháng 4, 10-1976: Khai trương: Trung Tâm Nhạc Tinh Ca Hai Mươi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 37, Nov. 12, 1976.

<sup>119</sup> “Buổi Trình Diễn Văn Nghệ và Chiều Phim,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 21, July 27, 1976.

services in the homeland. Fr. Trần Khắc Hỷ who once led a congregation in Bình Thuận Province, would become the chairman of the Vietnamese Catholic Community in Washington DC. He and Fr. Nguyễn Tấn Lập established the Catholic monthly *Tin Vui* in 1975 which continues circulation to this day.<sup>120</sup> Thích Giác Đức reformed Unified Buddhist Church in February 1976 and refugee writer Viên Linh (who once was a contributor to Buddhist forum *Đất Tổ* of the Republican era) served as the chief editor of the organization's newsletter *Đuốc Tuê*.<sup>121</sup> In 1977, Thích Giác Đức and his congregation established Buddhist temple in the New York area.<sup>122</sup> Similar organizations were also established for refugee congregations of the Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài sects. Veterans of the Republic of Vietnam's military residing in Orange County formed a support organization in March 1976 and was led by former colonel Huỳnh Văn Tôn who once served as the provincial head of Gia Định, commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. Major conferences held by Vietnamese refugees, such as that by the Orange Country's Vietnamese Association in 1977, often entailed participation or leadership by notables of the South Vietnamese society. In this conference, the presiding board included Lâm Lễ Trinh (former Interior Minister), Cao Xuân Vỹ (former Director of Youth under Ngô Đình Diệm), and Đàng Văn Sung (former chief editor of *Chính Luận*).<sup>123</sup>

Cultural activities in early Vietnamese America, however, cannot be divorced from politics of anticommunism. Engagement and promotion of Vietnamese culture by the refugees was often crafted around the idea of "cultural preservation," and, as such, involved an implicit political contrast with the communist "cultural destruction" transpiring in the homeland. In May 1976, the Association for Mutual Assistance and Preservation of Vietnamese National Culture sent a letter to then Secretary of State Henry Kissinger imploring the US government to "turn over to us the small library and paintings, decorations, etc., kept in the Embassy of the Republic of Vietnam in Washington DC or elsewhere." The basis for such a request was that the Vietnamese communists had "ordered the confiscation and destruction of many public libraries and banned the storing and keeping of nationalist (non-communist)...publications they considered as 'decadent.'" As such, the organizations pleaded for support in "preserv[ing] their 4,000-year old cultural heritage" by placing the contents of the former embassy in the hands of Vietnamese refugees overseas. Culture, as argued in the request, "is everlasting and should be used for human perfection and enjoyment of man." The artifacts of the embassy should not "be turned over to those who would reject it...but should rightfully belong to and used by Vietnamese Nationalists...for the benefit for their fellow Vietnamese but also to enrich the multi-cultural society of America."<sup>124</sup>

"Culture," as highlighted in the letter, is not a neutral concept for the Vietnamese refugee. Rather, it is one that quite politicized, delineating the "nationalist" Vietnamese identity from the "communist" one. Indeed, a promotion of the famous refugee writer Võ Phiến's first overseas publication *Thư Gửi Bạn* [Letter to a Friend] in 1976 framed the production as a response to communist cultural policies. As the promotion depicts, "the communists in Saigon are brutally incinerating the great cultural works of the Free Vietnamese people." However, such destruction

<sup>120</sup> "Việt kiều thủ đô Mỹ đã và đang làm gì?" *Trắng Đen*, No. 3, Mar. 27, 1976

<sup>121</sup> "Cộng đồng GH Phật Giáo VN thành lập tại Hoa Thịnh Đôn," *Trắng Đen*, No. 6, Apr. 16, 1976.

<sup>122</sup> "Tin Người Việt Khắp Nơi: Chùa Phật Giáo Tại New York và New Jersey," *Trắng Đen*, No. 41, Jan. 13, 1978.

<sup>123</sup> "Sanh Hoạt của Người Việt Tị Nạn: tập thể người Việt vùng Orange County báo động nguy cơ và kêu gọi sự đoàn kết," *Trắng Đen*, No. 50, Feb. 11, 1977.

<sup>124</sup> Nhi Van Ho, "A Request to US Authorities," *Trắng Đen*, No. 11, June 27, 1976

will not stifle cultural production of those overseas. Rather, in “this new land, the seeds of culture...are blooming and developing once again.” Võ Phiến’s book is depicted as amongst those “cultural works” re-blooming from overseas, and the importance of which was not only to “comfort” the current generation of refugees, but also for the “later generation...[which will] need to connect with and reignite the flame Vietnamese culture.” Similarly, an editorial by Huyền Vũ in *Trắng Đen* points to the need to “preserve the foundations of Vietnamese music.” As argued, the current communist government “recently enacted the policy of destroying the cultural foundations of the old regime, leaving to remain only communist culture.” As such, “we have the responsibility of protecting and developing refugee culture to create a valuable repertory for the future.”<sup>125</sup>

Evidently, “Vietnamese culture” was something that collectively bounded the refugees who fled overseas and, as pointed in one *Trắng Đen* editorial, was “deserving of pride...[and] will help us adjust ourselves to the circumstances of our new life overseas.” It was a means for “self-assurance,” something from which refugees could draw “strength” and resourcefulness. It was, in a sense, the avenue through which refugees could remain “Vietnamese” within a foreign country.<sup>126</sup> Creating new organizations and communal activities—the foundations of community life—was necessary for allowing Vietnamese refugees to come together and “support one another during times of crisis,” or provide means for the Vietnamese to “protect the essence of the people, and maintain the ancestral language.”<sup>127</sup> However, efforts to preserve “culture” is necessarily centered around the community’s identity as *anticommunist* refugees. This refugee population, on the one hand, were forced from their homeland as a result of the communist victory. And, on the other hand, this refugee population brought with them a political-cultural repertoire of Republican anticommunism. As such, the call by one *Trắng Đen* contributor for refugees to “come together to form Vietnamese overseas organizations or Vietnamese communities” must be situated in such context. Community formation around “cultural preservation” entailed not only wearing *áo dài* in formal gatherings, or eating “rice with proper chopsticks” in the evening, and consuming “*bún bò, phở* or *hủ tiếu*” on Sundays; it also meant the rejection of communism and maintenance of a “nationalist” Vietnamese identity.<sup>128</sup>

The political movements for Homeland Restoration and Human Rights in early Vietnamese America aided in bringing together “Vietnamese culture” and Republican anticommunist politics. The first refugee commemoration of the Hung Kings in San Diego, for example, highlighted the interlinkage between “cultural preservation” and Homeland Restoration in early Vietnamese refugee activities. Orchestrated by the “Force to Restore the Nation of Vietnam,” commemorative activities entailed nostalgic cultural performances of popular songs and theatre, including “Việt Nam Quê Hương Ta Ngạo Nghè” and “Tiếng Song Hương.” Musical performances were delivered by refugee musicians and actors, including Vũ Khanh who would later participate in various Vietnamese American productions of *Paris By Night* and by *Asia Entertainment*. The Association to Preserve National Culture, which provided choir for the event, viewed such commemoration as important for, on the one hand, “maintaining the cultural and ancestral rituals of Vietnam,” and, on the other hand, “supporting the resistance in the

<sup>125</sup> Huyền Vũ, “Bảo Vệ Nền Nhạc Việt,” *Trắng Đen*, No.9, May 11, 1976.

<sup>126</sup> Đỗ Quý Sang, “Niềm hãnh diện của nền văn hóa Việt Nam,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 2, Mar. 13, 1976.

<sup>127</sup> Giao Chỉ, “Thân Phận Người Tỵ Nạn và Con Đường Nên Đi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976.

<sup>128</sup> Giao Chỉ, “Thân Phận Người Tỵ Nạn và Con Đường Nên Đi,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976.

homeland.”<sup>129</sup> Similarly, the Greater Overseas Alliance sponsored one of the first theatrical works in Vietnamese America. Produced and enacted by the theatre group Đất Mới in 1978, the skit “Ngọn Cờ Quyết Tử” [Swear to Die Before the Flag] was performed at the swearing-in ceremony of the organization’s aspirations in February. The Greater Overseas Alliance also had its own “cultural troupe” *ban văn nghệ* which performed for events sponsored by the organization.<sup>130</sup>

These developments in anticommunist-inspired cultural engagements paved the way for establishing places of public gathering for community activities. One of such was the youth-based “Nationalist Vietnamese Activities Center” *Trung Tâm Sinh Hoạt Người Việt Quốc Gia* which overtook a storefront in Santa Ana in 1978. Although dedicated to “preservation and development of Vietnamese culture,” the organizers of this space also glorified the “resistance” in the homeland by displaying pictures and photographs of Homeland Restoration fighters alongside displays of the ancestral altar and the Republican flag. Thus, while the Center provided Vietnamese-language classes and youth activities on Saturday and Sundays, it also engaged in anticommunist activities, including propagating for Homeland Restoration movement.<sup>131</sup> Similar “Nationalist Vietnamese centers” would later be founded in a number of locations across the United States.<sup>132</sup>

Bridging of politics and culture also manifested in the Human Rights sphere of Vietnamese refugee mobilization. Here, Vietnamese activists found allies amongst other Indochinese refugee communities and American support. In commemoration of the 1977 Human Rights Day, for example, a major conference was held by the Houston chapter of the “Committee to Fight for Human Rights in Vietnam” to call upon the United Nations and world leaders to place pressure upon Vietnam to enact human rights reforms. The event was attended by numerous Vietnamese organizations well as their allies amongst the Laotian and Cambodian communities. Replete with nationalist and cultural symbols—including the ancestral altar upon the conference stage, the flags of the Indochinese countries in the background, and cultural performances following conferencing—events such as these signify the conjoining of cultural and nationalist symbol with anticommunist mobilization within the early Vietnamese American community.<sup>133</sup> Similar melding of politics and culture can be found in the “night of music” to support Human Rights, sponsored by Nationalist Vietnamese chapters in California.<sup>134</sup> The activities for the 1979 commemoration of the fall of Saigon was sponsored by a chapter of the “Committee to Fight for Human Rights in Vietnam” in Washington DC, and by the Greater

<sup>129</sup> Lê Minh and Thê Phương, “Lễ Giỗ Đức Hùng Vương,” *Trắng Đen*, Apr. 30, 1976.

<sup>130</sup> Công Phúc, “Ban Kịch Đất Mới Làm Khán Giả Khóc Ròng,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 42, Jan. 20, 1978. Furthermore, in 1982, the singer Nguyệt Ánh released an album entitled “Please Return to Liberate the Homeland,” with songs romanticizing “resistance” fighters and glorifying the Homeland Restoration movement (Advertisement of album cassette release in *Hồn Việt*, No. 140, Feb. 15, 1982).

<sup>131</sup> “Sinh Hoạt Người Việt QG,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Feb. 22, 1978.

<sup>132</sup> The Santa Ana organization would eventually establish a chapter in Los Angeles: Lê Dũng, “Đi và Sống với Đồng Hương VN,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 42, Jan. 20, 1978; “Trung Tâm Người Việt Quốc Gia,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 64, Feb. 1, 1981; More recent establishments of “Nationalist Vietnamese Centers”: Trần Văn, “Lễ Khánh Thành Trung Tâm Sinh Hoạt Cộng Đồng Người Việt Quốc Gia—Sacramento,” *Cộng Đồng Người Việt Quốc Gia Liên Bang Hoa Kỳ / Federation of Vietnamese American Communities of the USA, Inc.*, Oct. 7, 2013; “Houston: Đại Hội Cộng Đồng Người Việt Quốc Gia Hoa Kỳ,” *Việt Báo*, Oct. 19, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Thanh Dân, “Tuồng Thuật buổi lễ tranh đấu đòi nhân quyền tại Đông Dương,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 42, Jan. 20, 1978.

<sup>134</sup> Lê Dũng, “Đi và Sống với Đồng Hương VN,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 42, Jan. 20, 1978

Overseas Alliance in San Francisco.<sup>135</sup> These activities would soon be followed by major demonstrations in front of the White House that October to commemorate Human Rights Day.<sup>136</sup>

While political mobilization around Homeland Restoration and Human Rights conjoined anticommunist causes with expressions of Vietnamese culturality, community formation was also shaped by fervent policing of the Vietnamese America's boundaries. Similar to what had transpired during the Republican era, anticommunist activists sought to ensure that communist influences and sympathizers were excised from the community's political body. Here, the Anti-Neutralist Narrative of Republican anticommunism manifested most apparently. Recall, Republican Anti-Neutralism was a dual concept entailing, on the one hand, internal "resoluteness" and adamancy against communist propaganda, influences, and activities. On the other hand, the narrative was deployed externally to interpret geopolitical conditions of the Cold War and articulated the need for Republican Vietnam to remain steadfastly anticommunist rather than participate in the Non-Alignment Movement.

The latter application appeared most evidently in a 1978 public discussion hosted by the Greater Overseas Alliance regarding the prospect of neutralist diplomacy in Southeast Asia. Held at St. Barbara Church in Santa Ana, the event drew some 100 individuals including representatives from various religious and political groups, "notables," and human rights activists within the community. Presiding over the discussion was Fr. Đỗ Thanh Hà alongside Vi Nhân of the Greater Overseas Alliance, and issues for debate were presented by the South Vietnamese author Tô Vân. According to the presenter, recent diplomatic trips by then Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping highlighted the maneuvers by China to "neutralize" Southeast Asia. These trips have brought discussions in not only major English-language newspapers, but within Vietnamese refugee communities as well. With the prospect of a neutralist Vietnam looming, discussion was meant to "establish a stable standpoint [regarding neutralism] for Homeland Restoration and build Freedom and Democracy in the future."<sup>137</sup>

Appraisal of neutralism by most attendees reflected the political discourse of the Republican era. Tô Vân, for example, pointed to how "neutralism" has historically been deployed by the communists to "retreat one step to advance two steps, a traditional strategy of the Vietnamese communists." He pointed to the various instances of Republican history during which advocates for "Neutralist Government" were in fact communist agents, seeking to "deceive world opinion." In reality, the communists will not enact any democratic reforms internally, while propagating neutrality diplomatically. His statements were reinforced by another attendant who argued that for Vietnamese refugees to advocate for neutralism at this time would be to allow the Vietnamese communists the opportunity to bide their time. Given the recent incursions on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border and the stretching of communist's military capabilities, the overseas community must "strike the communists down and cannot accept the neutralism of the Vietnamese communists especially at this time." To do so would be catastrophic for "resistance" in the homeland. Alternatively, some participants view advocacy for neutralism as a plausible strategy to enact pressure on the Vietnamese communists. One

<sup>135</sup> Lê Dũng, "Đi và Sống với Đồng Hương VN: Hội Nhân Quyền Thủ Đô Chuẩn Bị Tổ Chức Ngày Quốc Hận 30-4," *Trắng Đen*, No. 148, Mar. 10, 1979; Lê Dũng, "Đi và Sống với Đồng Hương VN: Tổ Chức Trọng Thê ngày Quốc Hận 30-4," *Trắng Đen*, No. 150, Apr. 7, 1979.

<sup>136</sup> Lê Dũng, "Đi và Sống với Đồng Hương VN: Biểu Tình Việt mỹ Trước Tòa Bạch Ốc," *Trắng Đen*, Nov. 10, 1979.

<sup>137</sup> "Bản Nguyệt San Thứ Tinh tổ chức hội thảo về Trung Lập Hóa Đông Nam Á," *Thứ Tinh*, No.2, May 15, 1978.



participant, for example, acknowledged that “before, neutralism worried the people of the nation because Neutralism would easily lead to communism.” However, now it was the Vietnamese communists who feared neutralism because neutrality would mean reforms and participation of non-communists within affairs of politics. Such conditions would provide opportunity for the “Vietnamese people” to enact a political reversal and “retake state power.”<sup>138</sup>

Evidently, a singular “standpoint” on neutralism to unify Vietnamese exiles was not reached in such an event and the Greater Overseas Alliance adopted a wait-and-see position. As argued in one *Thức Tỉnh* editorial, Vietnamese refugees should simply “follow the developments of the times” and not be bogged down in the “selling of politics.” It was necessary, however, for Vietnamese refugees to be vigilant when it came to neutralism, particularly the neutralism that the communists proffered. Here, the Republican mantra that neutralism—or at least the communist sort—was a lie, a means for a deception, or a strategy for eventual domination was retained. For this *Thức Tỉnh* article, whether Vietnam becomes neutral or not, the fight is against communism, to create a free and independent Vietnam, and to support the resistance in the homeland. The need was for Vietnamese refugees to be resolved in these matters—diplomatic dealings were beside the issue.<sup>139</sup> Clearly, however, the Greater Overseas Alliance and other anticommunist voices in Vietnamese America rejected the prospect of normalization and any form of economic assistance to be provided towards Vietnam.

While the external application of Anti-Neutralism had vague usage beyond framing the diplomatic maneuvers of China and Indochinese communist countries,<sup>140</sup> its internal application had real repercussions for the political constitution of the Vietnamese refugee community. Early into exile, the Vietnamese refugees press had pointed to the presence of “communist sympathizers” in overseas communities.<sup>141</sup> Those who were labeled as such were often foreign exchange students who had come to the United States to study and had remained there following the fall of Saigon. A number had participated in the American anti-war movement and had expressed sympathies or support for the communist revolution in Vietnam. Rather than viewing these individuals as part of their overseas community, Vietnamese exiles—and in reflection of Republican-era politics—conceived these “communist sympathizers” as the political and ideological enemy who must be weeded out from the community. As argued in one *Trắng Đen* article, to be a “refugee” was to be automatically anticommunist. Those who sympathized or connected with the Vietnamese communist government have no standing as a “refugee.”<sup>142</sup>

From the very earliest days of Vietnamese America, anticommunist organizations sought to police the ideological boundaries of the community. Early activities manifested primarily as protest and harassment of individuals deemed to be sympathetic to communism. An early target was Nguyễn Văn Lũy who was a student in the United States during the Vietnam War and participated in the Anti-War Movement. In the aftermath of the fall of Saigon, he remained in the United States and headed the “Vietnamese Patriotic Association” *Hội Người Việt Yêu Nước* and ran the overseas newspaper *Thái Bình*, both of which was demonized in the anticommunist exile

<sup>138</sup> “Bản Nguyệt San Thức Tỉnh tổ chức hội thảo về Trung Lập Hóa Đông Nam Á,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No.2, May 15, 1978.

<sup>139</sup> Lê Minh Trực, “La Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 2, May 15, 1978.

<sup>140</sup> Trần Văn Sơn, “Vấn Đề Trung Lập Hóa VN,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 5, July 1, 1978.

<sup>141</sup> “Việt kiều thù đô Mỹ đã và đang làm gì?” *Trắng Đen*, No. 3, Mar. 27, 1976.

<sup>142</sup> Lê Thanh Hoàng Dân, “Vài câu hỏi hóc búa của đồng bào tị nạn,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 19. July 7, 1976.

press.<sup>143</sup> In May 1978, a contingent of exile demonstrators comprised of Greater Overseas Alliance aspirants and members belonging to the Nationalist Vietnamese Center gathered outside the St. John Episcopal Church in Los Angeles to protest a presentation sponsored by Nguyễn Văn Lũy and his organization on the “3 Years of Reconstruction in Vietnam.” The protesters brought with them a giant flag of the Republic, picket signs, and loudly accused the organization of communist sympathies, tying them to the “communist atrocities” in Vietnam. While no one was actually hurt during this event, the cars of those deemed to be communist had their brakes cut, and the rowdiness and commotion brought police presence. From 4pm in the evening until midnight, protestors oscillated between collective display of Vietnamese culturality (like singing “Việt Nam, Việt Nam”) and political indignation and shrieking condemnation against the “communist sympathizers” forced to barricade themselves inside the church.

Cases of political intimidation such as this was far from rare. In 1976, Vietnamese exiles waged a “movement” in Washington state to rip up communist-affiliated newspapers. In Chicago, Iranian students hosted an event at the local YMCA which was deemed “communist sympathetic.” Vietnamese students attacked the event, which brought police intervention and resulted in the arrest of several instigators.<sup>144</sup> In September, former Republican Rangers and Paratroopers attacked a meeting hosted by Nguyễn Văn Lũy at the Civic Center in San Francisco. This event, also, brought police intervention.<sup>145</sup> In the same month, a screening of a Vietnamese documentary was attacked by some 100 exile protesters in Fresno, condemned for being “communist sympathizers” and displaying the Vietnamese communist flag.<sup>146</sup> In October, exiles in Fresno protested another “communist” event at the Good Shepherd Church held by American Mennonites who were deemed by *Trắng Đen* to once had been opposed to the Vietnam War.<sup>147</sup> Cases such as these are lauded in the exile press. *Thức Tỉnh*'s report on the events at St. John Episcopal Church, for example, referred to Nguyễn Văn Lũy and his allies as “scoundrels” *bọn lưu manh*, “malefactor” *gian manh*, and “milfoil weed” *cỏ đuôi chó* while valorizing the protesters as “compatriots” *đồng hương* and “comrades” *chiến hữu* in the “struggle” for freedom. The newspaper relished in how protesters “kept the church surrounded,” terrorizing the enemy who had “hide out” *nấp trốn* in the church. According to the *Thức Tỉnh* report on the event, these individuals deserved such treatment because they “scheming and propagating” for the communists and were “filled with sin” for their anti-war activism.

Adamancy against “communist sympathizers” was similarly expressed in *Trắng Đen*. An early article by Lê Thanh Hoàng Dân in May 1976 depicted key locales of Vietnamese resettlement as new “battlefronts” between communist sympathizers and anticommunist exiles. In San Diego, New Jersey, and Washington DC, these “communist cadres” were disseminating propaganda, showing communist films, deceiving refugees about the conditions in the homeland, and encouraging those who had fled to “fill out forms asking to return” to Vietnam. Three

<sup>143</sup> “Miền Nam Hiện Nay Dưới Mắt Báo Cộng Sản,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 8, Apr. 30, 1976; Việt Định Phương, “Lá Thư Chủ Nhiệm,” *Trắng Đen*, Aug. 3, 1976; “Tay sai cộng sản VN tại Hoa Kỳ mở chiến dịch bôi lọ văn nghệ sĩ,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 37, Nov. 12, 1976; Đoàn Vũ, “Âm Mưu Thâm Độc của nhóm ‘Việt Kiều Yêu Nước Tại Mỹ,’” *Văn Nghệ Tiền Phong*, No. 47, 1978;

<sup>144</sup> “Từ Washington State tới Chicago, Xé Bỏ Cộng Sản, Đại Náo ĐH Chicago,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 12, May 31, 1976.

<sup>145</sup> “Sinh viên thân cộng lại xuyết ăn đòn,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 31, Oct. 2, 1976

<sup>146</sup> “Người Việt tị nạn đập Cộng Sản tại hai đầu nước Mỹ,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 32, Oct. 9, 1976

<sup>147</sup> Ngọc Hoài Phương, “Sanh Hoạt của Người Việt Tị Nạn: Chiều Phim Tuyên Truyền cho CS Bị Bà Con Phán Đối,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 40, Nov. 26, 1976.

proposals were made in this article to combat communist influences. First was “to beware and vigilant, absolutely do not allow the communists to deceive us once again.” The second was to “write letters of protest” to be sent to US representatives “condemning these activities, and request that...[the US] deport these communist cadres.” And last, wage protests to express our “standpoint to the American government and the United Nations” to ensure that these bodies would “safeguard world opinion before the dangerous schemes of the communists.”<sup>148</sup> Another article argues that communist sympathizers were “scheming” to denounce political activities of exiles as “beneficial to the Americans.” Ironically, this article claims that, rather than those victimizing, it was the “Vietnamese overseas refugees” who were being victimized, “terrorized” by communist agents. These communist sympathizers phoned in “threats,” threw rocks, tomatoes, rotten eggs, and grenades” during community gatherings and were seeking to sow discord within the exile community.<sup>149</sup> A similar depiction of anticommunists as victims and communists as perpetrators manifested in another article. Here, exiled students and veterans were depicted as defenders of the community who had set in motion “programs to stop the terrorist activities against Vietnamese refugees by the communist sympathizers.”<sup>150</sup> In an editor’s letter in August, Việt Định Phương called upon the exile press to “open the eyes of the overseas Vietnamese to the danger of communists operating abroad.” He called for alertness against “communist students” who may be trying to infiltrate Vietnamese organizations, and regularly condemn these activities in hopes of “generating resentment amongst the Vietnamese refugees so they will automatically stand up and fight” against communist schemes.<sup>151</sup>

Discursively, maintaining anticommunist adamancy against communist infiltration and influences was a mandatory condition for the success of the Homeland Restoration “resistance.” Here, rhetoric parallels Republican-era criticisms of those who failed to be psychologically “resolute” against communism. A 1977 editorial condemned not only “communist sympathizers” operating overseas, but also those who had succumbed to the “wealth and comfort” of the United States and are thus have “neglected” *lơ là* the conditions of their compatriots still in the homeland. These individuals do not believe in the possibility of Homeland Restoration and must be convinced otherwise. Similarly, Lê Minh Trục decries such “pacifists” and “optimists,” those who had willingly surrendered, those who had “accepted this place [the United States] as their homeland.” For the author, they went against the necessity of the moment and the cause of Homeland Restoration. Thus, while the Vietnamese exile community must be vigilant against communist sympathizers, they must also work to bring confidence and reassurance to the Homeland Restoration cause. Victory, as argued by *Thức Tỉnh*, will come to the Vietnamese people “in the spirit of determined struggle,” and opposition was required against any “schemes,” whether from “imperialists” or sympathizers who had infiltrated the community.<sup>152</sup>

As such, with the fate of Homeland Restoration perceived as resting upon the anticommunist resilience and support by Vietnamese exile overseas, community formation was

<sup>148</sup> Lê Thanh Hoàng Dân, “Mưu Toan của CS Việt ở Mỹ và Phản Ứng của Người Tỵ nạn,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 12, May 31, 1976.

<sup>149</sup> “Các tổ chức Việt tị nạn nên đề phòng thủ đoạn CS,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 14, June 6, 1976.

<sup>150</sup> “Sinh viên và cựu quân nhân quyết không cho CS khủng bố người Việt,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 46, Jan. 23, 1977

<sup>151</sup> Việt Định Phương, “Lá Thư Chủ Nhiệm,” *Trắng Đen*, Aug. 3, 1976.

<sup>152</sup> Lê Minh Trục, “Dân tộc VN nhất định thắng Cộng Sản,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No.3, June 1, 1978; “Sinh Hoạt Nội Bộ: Khu Bộ Úc Châu Chiến Bằng Vàng Danh Dự,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No.3, June 1, 1978; Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 5, July 1, 1978.

inextricably bound to the politics surrounding the movement. The Greater Overseas Alliance, for example, sponsored various activities in the community, from annual commemorations and cultural celebrations to religious and student organizations. As such, the organization aided in the cultural and political development of early Vietnamese America. Particularly notable, the organization supported the establishment of the Vietnamese Catholic Center *Trung Tâm Công Giáo Việt Nam* in Orange County.<sup>153</sup> Originally the Center consisted of little more than a set of apartment buildings located in Stanton and was managed by Fr. Đỗ Thanh Hà from 1978-1988. Later on, a sizable church would be constructed in Santa Ana, funded through community donations, and its structures were designed to commemorate the 117 Vietnamese Catholic Martyrs.<sup>154</sup> While supportive of early Vietnamese cultural and religious organizations, the Greater Overseas Alliance also had conditions on what kind of organization it would endorse, namely those which adhered to anticommunist politics. One particular case involving students at a college in Long Beach, CA made this plainly obvious.

In July 1978, Vietnamese college students in Long Beach planned to sponsor a “Vietnamese Week” to begin on August 20<sup>th</sup> and to end at the beginning of September. The Greater Overseas Alliance received an invitation to “cooperate and support” for a “night of culture,” but *Thức Tỉnh* publicly refused the invitation, arguing that the Vietnamese student organization was “once the foundation of communist activities” led by Nguyễn Văn Lữ’s organization. To make matters worse for the students in Long Beach, their celebration of Vietnamese culture fell “exactly on the days that Vietnamese communist cadres celebrate...[their] capture of state power in Vietnam.” For the Greater Overseas Alliance, the suspicious nature of such an event gave them pause and called upon the students to revise their scheduled date as to avoid communist association and “receive the support of the Vietnamese people who are currently refugees in the United States.”<sup>155</sup> The students, in the end, did revise their date, but only after attending a meeting at the Nationalist Vietnamese Center, during which they were lectured and interrogated by anticommunist activists and the members of the Greater Overseas Alliance. Anticommunist unity around pressuring the Long Beach college students to reschedule their “Vietnamese Week” eventually led to the creation of an “Anticommunist Coordinating Committee” *Ủy Ban Phối Hợp Hành Động Chống Cộng* which vowed to “excise communist abuse and influences” and regulate the cultural content circulating within the community.<sup>156</sup>

By the turn of the decade, a Vietnamese America that reflected its Republican anticommunist roots was clearly taking form in the United States. Republican anticommunism provided a common discourse and set of political norms that guided the activities of early Vietnamese America. Community formation, as argued above, emerged in tandem with mobilization around advocacy for Human Rights and Homeland Restoration. While these movements did not “cause” organizational formation in early Vietnamese America, the rise of

<sup>153</sup> “Sinh Hoạt Nội Bộ: Thành Lập Trung Tâm Công Giáo Việt Nam, Giáo Phận Orange—California—Hoa Kỳ,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 6, July 15, 1978.

<sup>154</sup> Cộng Đồng Công Giáo Việt Nam Giáo Phận Orange, “Đền Thánh Tử Đạo Trung Tâm Công Giáo Việt Nam,” (VABC Television & Multimedia). <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErZ3tTIrB4>>.

<sup>155</sup> “Sinh Hoạt Nội Bộ: Hội Sinh Viên VN tại Đại Học Long Beach Tổ Chức Đêm Văn Nghệ Áo Dài 2-9-1978,” No. 6, July 15, 1978.

<sup>156</sup> “Cùng với Seattle Bang Washington, Tiểu Bang California cũng đã: Thành Lập Ủy Ban Phối Hợp Hành Động,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 8., Aug. 15, 1978

these movements did aid in bringing together anticommunist politics and Vietnamese culture, establishing the foundations of an overseas “nationalist” identity. These movements inspired political and cultural life amongst Vietnamese refugees in the United States and created an overseas “imagined community” through collective events, newspaper reports, and political activism. Indeed, within the first several years of their exodus, Vietnamese refugees were coordinating activities around not only common holidays, commemorations, or celebration; protests, demonstrations, and efforts to excise “communist sympathizers” occurred through the congregating of Vietnamese exiles from dispersed locations across the country. These efforts allowed those in Southern California to be aware of their refugees on the East Coast, in Washington State, in the American South, and even Vietnamese exiles in Australia, France, and West Germany. As such, the consciousness of dispersed but ideologically unified, common-minded, anticommunist “compatriots,” “comrades,” “brethren,” or the like was formed during the early years of exodus. These developments laid the stepping stones for the explosion of anticommunist activism that would transpire during the 1980s.

### *The Front to Unify Them All*

Perhaps one of the most powerful political organizations to emerge in Vietnamese American history, the National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam *Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Thống Nhất Giải Phóng Việt Nam* was founded in 1982 through the conjoined efforts of various anticommunist organizations participating in the Homeland Restoration effort. Colloquially referred to simply as “the Front” *Mặt Trận*, the organization was led by a former Vice-Admiral named Hoàng Cơ Minh. Although a virtual unknown in Republican-era politics, Hoàng Cơ Minh rose to political prominence through the support of military men who had established political reputations. The Front was also jointly led by the former Lieutenant General Nguyễn Chánh Thi and the former Chief of Police Phạm Văn Liễu. The former (Part III of this dissertation) had led the “Young Turks” alongside Nguyễn Cao Kỳ and Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. Commander of the First Tactical Zone during the Republican Interregnum, he orchestrated the reception of the first American combat troops who landed in Đà Nẵng in 1965 and once had a popular following amongst the Vietnamese residing the Central region and those who participated in the 1966 Struggle Movement. Ousted from power following the collapse of the Struggle Movement, Thi and his family were exiled to the United States prior to the formation of the Second Republic. Phạm Văn Liễu had been a colonel and was a protégé of Nguyễn Chánh Thi. Once holding one of the most important intelligence positions in Saigon, he was later given limited duties as a military instructor under the presidency of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. He fled to the United States in the wake of the communist final offensive on Saigon.<sup>157</sup>

The military leadership constituting this organization made it particular amongst the Homeland Restoration organizations that had emerged prior. Early Homeland Restoration activism had been led by civil leaders such as journalists, politicians, and religious public figures. While former military men, through groups like the Armed Forces or Veterans Organization, participated in mobilizing support for the “resistance” in the homeland, they were not at the forefront of the movement’s leadership. The shift in Homeland Restoration politics towards military-based leadership occurred in tandem with the official outbreak of the Third

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<sup>157</sup> Phạm Trần, “Phạm Văn Liễu: Con Ngựa Già Chưa Biết Mỏi,” in *Tưởng Niệm Đại Tá Phạm Văn Liễu (1927-2010)*, (Việt Nam Văn Hiến, 2010), 3-6.

Indochina War in 1979. While early groups like the Greater Overseas Alliance had signaled their intentions to form an “Overseas Legion” of cadres who would return to Vietnam to fight alongside the “resistance,” activities by the Greater Overseas Alliance focused primarily on community formation, political training of cadres, and establishing chapters across various exile communities. As such, while the early phase of Homeland Restoration did much to propagate and circulate the notion of communist overthrow, an actual military force that could conceivably enact guerrilla war against the communist state did not manifest.

The Greater Overseas Alliance would continue to operate during the 1980s. Its political influence, however, became particularly muted following the turn of the decade.<sup>158</sup> The organization, nevertheless, did lay lasting foundations within numerous exile communities abroad. Supportive of local establishments in Southern California like the Nationalist Vietnamese Center and the Vietnamese Catholic Center, these spaces continued to operate despite the Greater Overseas Alliance’s decline. Of particular significance, the Greater Overseas Alliance aided in forming the “Vietnamese People’s Salvation Front” *Mặt Trận Cứu Dân Tộc Việt Nam* led by former colonel Võ Đại Tôn. Once a leader in the Australian chapter of the Greater Overseas Alliance,<sup>159</sup> Võ Đại Tôn branched out to form his own Homeland Restoration organization in March 1979—though to the dissatisfaction of the Greater Overseas Alliance’s core chapters in the States.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, while *Trắng Đen* was closely allied to the Greater Overseas Alliance during the organization’s heyday, following the formation of the Vietnamese People’s Salvation Front, its editor turned attention away from its former ally to support Tôn’s organization. Animosity between *Trắng Đen* and *Thức Tỉnh* would last into the 1980s.<sup>161</sup>

Võ Đại Tôn and his organization would eventually become internationally renowned amongst Vietnamese exiles. Perhaps the first within the Homeland Restoration movement to actually return to the homeland to fight, Tôn and members of his organization were captured by communist forces in 1981, attempting to infiltrate Vietnam. He would languish in a Vietnamese prison for a decade before finally being released. His release in 1991, in part, resulted from massive international support and mobilization of Vietnamese exiles who glorified his failed venture as a representation of Vietnamese patriotism.<sup>162</sup> Acquiring a popular following in the

<sup>158</sup> The decline of the Greater Overseas Alliance, in part, was also a result of somewhat politically supporting the “Committee for National Salvation” *Ủy Ban Cứu Nước* Trương Như Tảng and Đoàn Văn Toại (“Ủy Ban Cứu Nước Công Bố Lập Trường 10 Điểm,” *Người Việt*, Sep. 23, 1981). These men were formerly associated with the communist guerrilla movement in Vietnam and the communist government. They sought to use Chinese hostilities against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as a means to overthrow the communist regime. Because of their former communist ties and their proposed strategy, they were roundly criticized as rejected as legitimate by most Homeland Restoration groups (“Tuồng trình chính trị: Đại Hội Lực Lượng Quân Nhân,” *Người Việt*, Dec. 5, 1981; “Ô. Lục Phương Ninh nói rõ: Chống Tảng,” *Người Việt*, Nov. 14, 1981). The Greater Overseas Alliance sought, explicitly, to strategically utilize Tảng’s organization as another weapon against the Vietnamese communists—rather than acknowledging their leadership in Homeland Restoration as such (“Những ý kiến quanh vấn đề liên kết với Trương Như Tảng”).

<sup>159</sup> Carl D. Robinson (dateline author), *The Associated Press*, May 1, 1978.

<sup>160</sup> “Mặt Trận Giải Cứu Dân Tộc VN Hợp Báo Ra Tuyên Ngôn Tại Úc,” *Trắng Đen*, No. 150, Apr. 7, 1979.

<sup>161</sup> Vi Nhân, “Lá Thư Liên Minh,” *Thức Tỉnh*, No. 64, Feb. 1, 1981

<sup>162</sup> “Võ Đại Tôn: Từ tư tưởng đến hành động, đi tìm hiểu con người đang làm rung chuyển con tim hàng triệu đồng bào VN,” *Người Việt*, July 28, 1982; “5000 đồng bào biểu dương tinh thần Võ Đại Tôn,” *Người Việt*, No. 126, Aug. 11, 1982; “Chiến Hữu Võ Đại Tôn Trên đài truyền hình nhật bản,” *Người Việt*, Sep. 8, 1982; *Người Việt Daily News* called upon Vietnamese refugees to adopt “the spirit of Võ Đại Tôn” (“Chí nguyện đoàn hải ngoại trình bày chi tiết về biến cố Võ Đại Tôn,” and “Thành phần ủy ban vận động và phát huy tinh thần Võ Đại Tôn,” *Người Việt*, Aug. 4,

United States, he was awarded honors “for his courage and devotion to the cause of securing freedom” by the Washington State in 1994.<sup>163</sup>

By 1982, conditions in Indochina had greatly changed and so had the Vietnamese exile’s political horizon. Phnom Penh had fallen to Vietnamese forces within a month of Vietnam’s counteroffensive against the Khmer Rouge, pushing Cambodian forces into retreat to the Thai-Cambodian borders. China would attack Vietnam in January 1979, retreating after only 2 months of fighting. While evidently military victories for the newly unified Vietnam, these conflicts bred political destabilization in Southeast Asia and reconfigured the Vietnamese exile’s imagination. Rather than being eliminated, Khmer Rouge forces continued guerrilla war against what they viewed as an occupying Vietnamese army. Former enemies in Cambodian politics turned into allies as a host of Cambodian groups, including the Khmer Serei, Khmer Rouge, and contingents loyal to Sihanouk, joined forces to form the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front to oppose a newly formed pro-Vietnamese Cambodian state. Operating out of refugee camps in Thailand, the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front received military aid from both China and the United States in its efforts to oust the occupying Vietnamese army.<sup>164</sup> News of Võ Đại Tôn’s failed infiltration of Vietnam had also reached exile communities overseas. Here, the prospect of direct participation by Vietnamese exiles in the Indochinese conflict became real. War had come to Indochina and, as perceived by Vietnamese exiles, the communist regime was military stretched due to its occupation of Cambodia, contention with a hostile China, and the continued anticommunist resistance within the homeland. The turn of the decade presented a crucial historical opportunity for Vietnamese exiles to finally overthrow the despised communist state.<sup>165</sup>

Evidently, the Front took full advantage of this reconfigured imagination in Homeland Restoration politics. The organization presented itself as a bona fide military force, specializing in guerrilla war and popular insurgency.<sup>166</sup> As one Front publication argued, what was required in the present moment was not “a more powerful army, but...an armed force that is derived from the people.” This force would depend on the local population for “physical and material” support and would conduct guerrilla war (du kích chiến) to “destroy the defensive infrastructure of the enemy ... [and] bring confusion within the enemy ranks.”<sup>167</sup> Photographs and depictions of Front members in military uniforms, armed with M-16s, and training in undisclosed jungle locations

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1982); English-language mentions: “How a free spirit survived 10 years of hell,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, Jan. 8, 1992; “Richmond’s face of freedom,” *The Age*, Jan. 23, 1992.

<sup>163</sup> SENATE RESOLUTION 1994-8661

<sup>164</sup> Michael Radu, *The New Insurgencies: Anticommunist Guerrillas in the Third World*, (Transaction Publishers, 1990), 197-231; Courtland Robinson, “Refugee Warriors at the Thai-Cambodian Border,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vo. 19, 2000; Justin Corfield, *A history of the Cambodian non-communist resistance 1975-1983*, (Center of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1991);

<sup>165</sup> “Lập quân đội cách mạng ngay trong lãnh thổ Việt Nam,” *Người Việt*, Aug. 22, 1981; “Cam Bốt: Chìa khóa giải pháp chính trị toàn bộ Đông Dương,” *Người Việt*, Mar. 7, 1982; “Áp lực biên giới gia tăng, đài Hanoi leo thang tố cáo từ ‘phân động’ đến ‘tướng cướp,’” Oct. 28, 1981. See also: Nguyễn Thức, “Nhận Định: Thê Cờ Mới,” *Hành Trang*, No. 3, Dec. 1983; Kiên Đạt, “Cuộc Chiến Thứ Ba ở Đông Dương: Chiến Tranh Kăm-Pu-Chia và Chiến Tranh Biên Giới Hoa Việt,” *Khai Phong*, No. 11, May, 30, 1983; “Việt cộng chuẩn bị tấn công mùa khô tại Kampuchia,” *Sóng* 1:5(Oct. 1982); “Kháng Chiến Việt Nam,” *Sài Gòn*, No. 3, Apr. 1, 1982; Importance of Third Indochina War for homeland restoration: Phạm Văn Liễu, *Trở Về Sông Núi: Tập III* (Văn Hóa, 2004), 135-140.

<sup>166</sup> David DeVoss, “A Long Way From Home: Some Vietnamese Immigrants have Quietly Assimilated; for Others Who Yearn to Return Home, the War Goes On,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 5, 1986.

<sup>167</sup> “Xây dựng một lực lượng vũ trang,” *Nguyệt San Người Việt Tự Do*, January 1982.

littered the pages of Vietnamese America's *Người Việt* during the early 1980s.<sup>168</sup> Reporting by *Người Việt* and other Vietnamese American forums regularly highlighted the former military elite forces amongst the Front's ranks, particularly its constituency of South Vietnamese Special Forces, Rangers, and Paratroopers. The historical association of these military units with Republican counterinsurgency operations reinforced the image of the Front as a force capable of waging guerrilla insurgency. In one report, the training regimen of former lieutenant colonel Lê Hồng was featured. Described in this report as "ha[ving] great experience and ability in guerrilla warfare and politics," the former South Vietnamese paratrooper often appear in photographs next to Hoàng Cơ Minh, and Lê Hồng's regular appearance in full military dress further lent credence to the organization's claim to military competence.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Today's *Người Việt Daily News* is the longest running newspaper in any Vietnamese community abroad. Located in Little Saigon—the epicenter of Vietnamese refugee politics and culture—the newspaper caters to topics of interests, relevance, and concern for Vietnamese Americans.

<sup>169</sup> "Phó đề đốc Hoàng Cơ Minh cầm đầu toán về nước," *Người Việt*, Oct. 14, 1981; "Tường trình chánh trị: Tiếp xúc hai toán chiến hữu," *Người Việt*, Feb. 17, 1982.

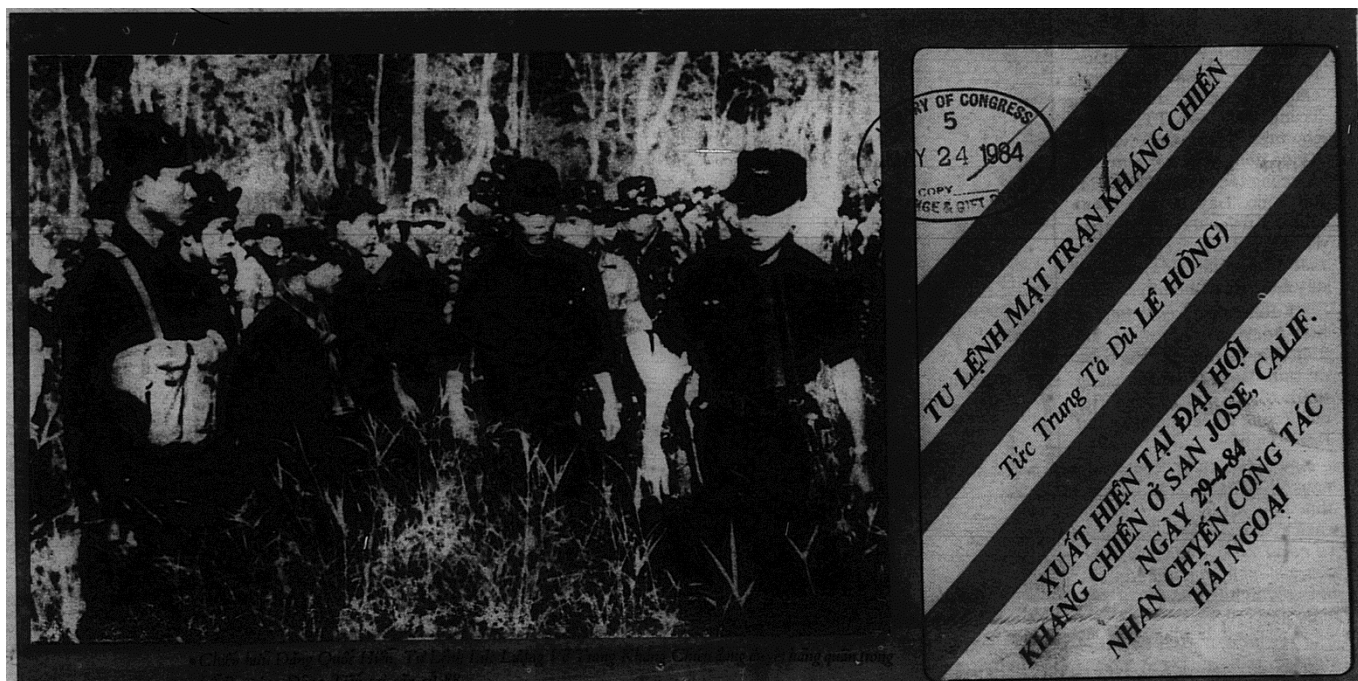




Photograph of the Front's "guerrillas." Source: *Los Angeles Times*.



Hoàng Cơ Minh receiving crowd at an Orange County high school in 1983. In public appearances, Minh wears a plaid shawl, typical in traditional wear amongst Cambodians and Montagnard communities of the Central Highlands. Source: *Los Angeles Times*.



Lê Hồng and his troops in an undisclosed jungle location. Source: *Người Việt*

Mobilization by the Front was, for the most part, quite successful. Despite early opposition, the Front, nevertheless, expanded its activities across the mid-1980s. It acquired continuous endorsement from the newspaper *Người Việt*, coverage in the English-language press, and gained international prominence amongst Vietnamese student groups.<sup>170</sup> The Front eventually also gained some measure of support from American representatives and was given an audience before the US Senate in May 1983, during which Hoàng Cơ Minh promoted the activities of the organization. With a popular following and a powerful propaganda apparatus, at its height, the Front boasted some 96 chapters based in numerous Vietnamese communities across the United States, Europe, Australia, and Japan.<sup>171</sup>

While the influences of the Front would gradually fade following the death of Hoàng Cơ Minh in 1987, its political activities during the mid-1980s reinforced the cultural norms and the anticommunist discourse that had manifested during the Vietnamese America's formative years. Like other anticommunist organizations before it, the Front aided in the generating of political and cultural life in Vietnamese America. While the leadership of the Front consisted primarily of former military officers, its public relations wing was led by civil leaders, journalists, and political activists. Formed in 1982 alongside the Front, the "People's Movement to Support the Resistance" *Phong Trào Nhân Dân Yểm Trợ Kháng Chiến* [Support Movement] was primarily responsible for organizing cultural events and rallies in support of the Front.<sup>172</sup> Chaired by Phạm Ngọc Lũy (a man who became a refugee legend for providing safe passage of fleeing Vietnamese onboard the vessel *Trường Xuân* in the days of Saigon's collapse) the Support Movement allowed the Front to mobilize both the bellicose image of Homeland Restoration and notions of Human Rights and refugee deliverance.<sup>173</sup>

Across the 1980s, the Support Movement sponsored numerous rallies that often drew in thousands of supporters. In February 1983, some 6,000 gathered at the convention center in Anaheim, CA, paying \$5 a ticket to show support for the Front, Hoàng Cơ Minh, and the "resistance" in the homeland. While an event was tailored around the politics of Homeland Restoration, it was also to celebrate the Lunar New Years, replete with "musical and martial arts performers."<sup>174</sup> In June, some 250 wealthy benefactors paid \$150-a-piece to attend a dinner with Hoàng Cơ Minh at Anaheim's Hyatt Hotel.<sup>175</sup> To mark the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Saigon, the Front sponsored a conference in Washington DC with addresses from Hoàng Cơ Minh, denunciation of communism, and 2,000-man march from Lafayette Park to Pennsylvania

<sup>170</sup> Dan Rather's CBS Evening News provided the Front a five-minute segment in 1982, which was quickly picked up and praised by Vietnamese overseas press ("Xôn xao chờ 'kháng chiến lên ti vi,'" *Người Việt*, Mar. 31, 1982; "Chúng tôi chỉ cần đồng bào vn chúng tôi khắp thế giới," *Người Việt*, Mar. 31, 1982; Vertical file, OC&SEA Collection, University of California, Irvine. Student support: "Hội thảo phục quốc," *Người Việt*, Dec. 26, 1981; "Tuyên cáo của đại hội SVVN Âu Châu Bruxelles 14.15 1 1981," *Người Việt*, Dec. 19, 1981; "Sinh Viên Vùng Bắc Cali tổ chức đêm không ngủ," *Người Việt*, Apr. 21, 1982. See examples of endorsement from other overseas Vietnamese newspapers: "8/3/83 Ngày Chiến Đấu Cho Tự Do," *Thắng Mò*, No. 41, Mar. 12, 1983; Hoàng Sơn, "Cương Lĩnh Chính Trị của Mặt Trận," *Quê Mẹ*, May 1982.

<sup>171</sup> "The Nation: Times Beach Set Curfew," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1983.

<sup>172</sup> Wayne King, "U.S. Vietnamese Rally for Resistance," *New York Times*, June 3, 1983; David Holley, "Resistance Movement has Supporters—but also doubters: Viet Refugees Pin Hopes on a Long Shot," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1983.

<sup>173</sup> "Opening speech by the President of the national Support Movement for the Resistance in Vietnam, April 3, 1982," in *The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam: The National Support Movement for the Resistance in Viet-Nam*, (Overseas Department, Oct. 1, 1982), 46-53.

<sup>174</sup> "6,000 Vietnamese Gather to Support Fight for Country," *The Associated Press*, Feb. 13, 1983.

<sup>175</sup> David Holley, "Resistance Movement has Supporters—but also doubters: Viet Refugees Pin Hopes on a Long Shot," *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1983.

Avenue. Marchers called for support of the “resistance” while demanding “Human rights for Vietnam!”<sup>176</sup> The following year, 11,000 filled the seats of Anaheim Convention Center in March to rally in support of the Front.<sup>177</sup> And in April, to mark the fall of Saigon, activities surrounding the “Day of National Resistance” *Ngày Quốc Kháng* (that is, in place of “Day of National Resentment” *Ngày Quốc Hận*) brought some 4,000 exiles to San Jose to condemn communism and praise the “resistance.”<sup>178</sup> In Canada, also commemorating the “Day of National Resistance,” some 800 attended a “night of culture” entailing performances by popular exile musicians and theatrical troupes.<sup>179</sup> The Front even hosted beauty pageants.<sup>180</sup> The massive turnout of supporters at these Front-sponsored events highlight not only the political influence of the organization during the period, but the dominance of Homeland Restoration politics in 1980s Vietnamese America. As with the Greater Overseas Alliance and other anticommunist organizations that preceded it, the Front interweaved its political messaging with a celebration of Vietnamese culture, reinforcing an anticommunist “Vietnameseness” amongst exile communities overseas.<sup>181</sup>

Alongside holding large scale rallies, cultural productions, and commemorative events, the public arm of the Front also produced an oeuvre of publications promulgating Homeland Restoration and the anticommunist cause. Most significantly, the Front ran its own monthly newspaper *Kháng Chiến* [Resistance], first issued in April 1982. Discursively, these Front publications, like that of the Greater Overseas Alliance, drew upon that political-cultural repertoire of Republican anticommunism to frame the Front’s political activities, narrate its connection to the Republican past, caricaturize its communist enemy, and interpret developments in the homeland and abroad. As such, the Republican anticommunist narratives, terminologies, and depictions were similarly reconstructed during the era of the Front.

Reflective of the broader patterns in how Republican anticommunism had been reconfigured, publications by the Front cast the refugee experience as an extension of the suffering and loss resulting from a war that, in typical Republican anticommunist narration, was caused by the communists. One of the earlier publications of the Front came in 1982 as a pamphlet documenting the “Vietnamese People’s Fight for Survival” through historical photographs. With captions in both English and Vietnamese, the pamphlet relays images of death and destruction caused during the war and after to evocatively conjure notions of victimhood, flight, and perpetual communist brutality against the Vietnamese people. These images are squarely situated in the dominant anticommunist discourse of the Republican era and demonstrate the reutilization of constitutive narratives to frame contemporary Vietnamese refugee experience. A set of these photographs are reproduced below.

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<sup>176</sup> “March Held to Support Vietnam Resistance,” *The Associated Press*, Apr. 30, 1983.

<sup>177</sup> “Thousands Rally to Support End to Communist Rule in Vietnam,” *The Associated Press*, Mar. 18, 1984.

<sup>178</sup> “Bài Nói Chuyện của Tướng Đặng Quốc Hiền,” *Người Việt*, No. 294, May 6, 1984.

<sup>179</sup> “Văn Nghệ Quốc Kháng Tại Ottawa, Canada,” *Người Việt*, No. 294, May 6, 1984.

<sup>180</sup> “Tổ chức Hoa hậu yểm trợ kháng chiến, tang cường sức mạnh cho Mặt Trận QGTN Kháng Chiến,” *Người Việt*, No. 126, Aug. 11, 1982.

<sup>181</sup> Broadcasts of Support Movement activities from 1982 can be found in *The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam: The National Support Movement for the Resistance in Viet-Nam*, (Overseas Department, Oct. 1, 1982), 54-64.

Figure 1



Immediately after signing the Geneva Accords, the North Communist trampling them underfoot invaded and occupied the South with weapons and the full back-up of Russia.  
Việt công đã ký hiệp định Geneva, và cũng chính chúng đã xé hiệp định này, xâm chiếm miền Nam với vũ khí và sự trợ giúp của quan thầy Nga xô.

• In 1954, the Communists took over North Vietnam, more than 800,000 people had to flee to the South by every means.  
• Năm 1954, miền Bắc Việt Nam bị Cộng sản hóa, hơn 800.000 người đã dùng đủ mọi phương tiện để xuôi Nam tìm tự do!

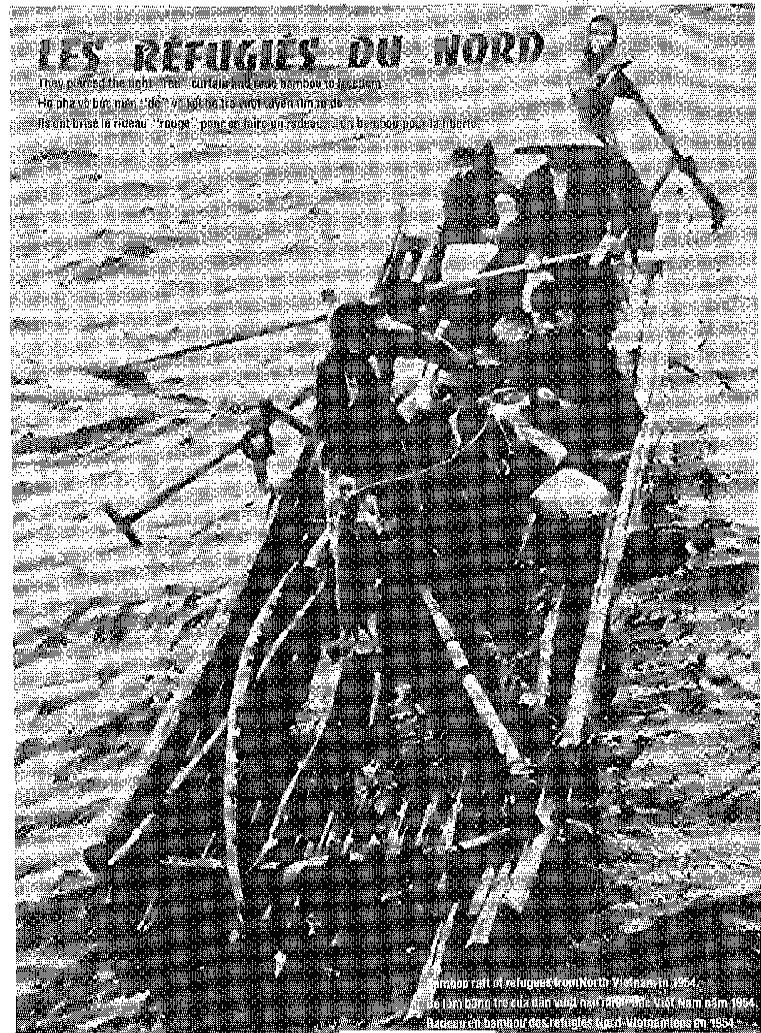


Figure 2

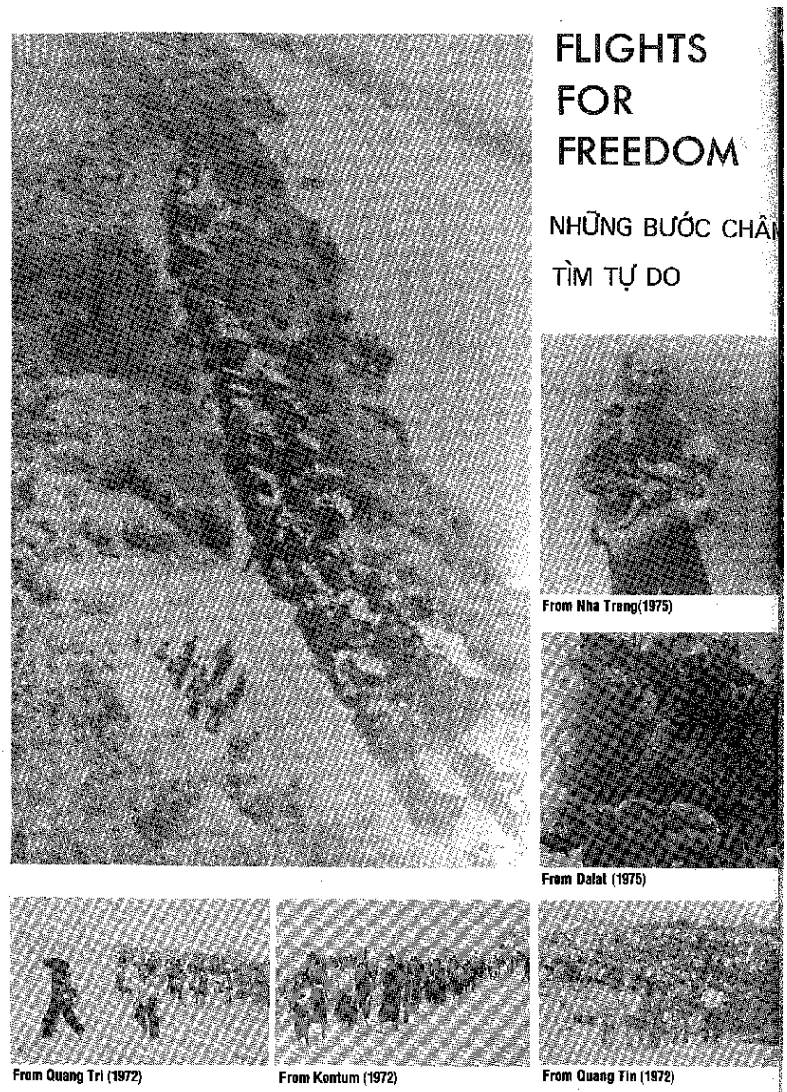


Figure 3

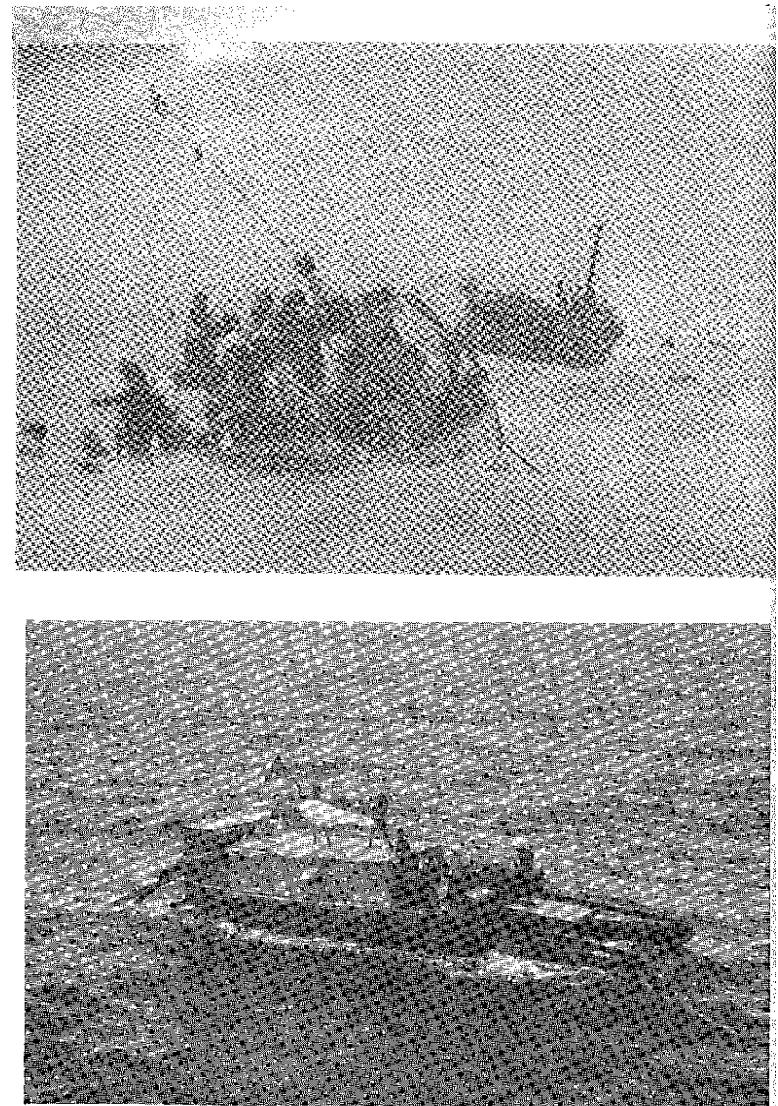


Figure 4

Figure 1 shows a supposed image of North Vietnamese tanks and troops moving into South Vietnamese territory “immediately” following the signing of the Geneva Accords. Here, the image and caption replicate the embedded Republican anticommunist notion that, despite being the signers of the Geneva Accords, the communists were the ones who violated the treaty by “invad[ing] and occup[y]ing” the Southern territory with the support of international communism.<sup>182</sup> Part of a pamphlet meant to convey the “brutality” of the communist regime in Vietnam and the suffering brought upon the Vietnamese people, the image and caption reference the Geneva Narrative by pointing not to the “atrocities” committed by communist hands, but also narrative’s familiar caricature that communists were liars and deceivers—an enemy who could not be trusted politically.<sup>183</sup> Recall, the Geneva Narrative (as it was formed in 1955) depicts the Geneva Accords as a “scheme” that was formed through “collusion” between the French colonialists and the Vietnamese communists to deceive and betray the Vietnamese people. This betrayal manifested in the “painful” division of the country and provided the communists diplomatic legitimacy. As such, with a secure hold over the North, the communists turned their eyes southward and sought to overtake the entirety of the Vietnamese territory and place it under communist rule. The signing of the Geneva Accords, as repeated throughout Republican history, marked the beginning of the tragedy, devastation, and warfare that would befall Vietnam. As the Geneva Accords symbolized the origins of war during the Republican era, in the post-1975 moment, it became recalibrated to frame the refugee “flight” from Indochina.

Figure 2 extends on the graphical narrative represented in Figure 1. Due to the 1954 Geneva Accords, the captions cite that “more than 800,000 people had to flee to the South” as a result of the communist takeover of North Vietnam.<sup>184</sup> Here, the rickety “bamboo” raft of northern refugees fleeing communism harkens to depictions of victimhood and desperation that were central to how the Diệm administration had narrated the consequences of the Geneva Accords during the Communist Denunciation Campaign. The passage excerpted from a PSP document at the beginning of chapter presents precisely this narrative. Figure 3 demonstrates how the pamphlet extends on the theme of “flight” by portraying photographs of those fleeing war zones prior to 1975.<sup>185</sup> The theme of “flight” continues into the portrayal of contemporary “boat people” represented in Figure 4.<sup>186</sup> The post-1975 photographs documented in the pamphlet are presented as a consequence of “the day [that] began the darkest era ever known in Vietnam history,” namely the fall of Saigon.<sup>187</sup> Yet the image of rickety post-1975 boats shown in Figure 4 parallels the image from 1954. In essence, the pamphlet portrays a historical continuity in the Vietnamese experience with communism. Just as those who fled the communist north in 1954 in search of freedom in the South and those who fled the devastation of the war that the communists orchestrated, the post-1975 refugees, too, fled communism, braving the “winds and waves of the endless ocean” in search of freedom on American shores.

This recalibration of themes from the Geneva Narrative was apparent throughout the various political tracts produced by the Front across the course of the Homeland Restoration movement. The 1982 “Political Program” of the organization regurgitated the familiar notion

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<sup>182</sup> National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, *Vietnamese People’s Fight for Survival / Chúng Tôi Muốn Sống*, published Oct. 1, 1982, 18

<sup>183</sup> Section is entitled “The Sorrowful Days,” *Vietnamese People’s Fight for Survival*, 12-54.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>185</sup> *Vietnamese People’s Fight for Survival*, 27.

<sup>186</sup> *Vietnamese People’s Fight for Survival*, 49.

<sup>187</sup> *Vietnamese People’s Fight for Survival*, 29.

that “in 1954, the Communists...colluded with the French to split the country at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel.” This resulted in the consolidation of communist rule in the north and the “victimiz[ation]” of millions of compatriots during land reform. Not satisfied with their rule over North Vietnam, “the Vietcong, under the banner of ‘fighting the Americans, liberating the impoverished and hungry South Vietnam and reunifying the country,’ again launched a second war which dragged for 15 years.” Depicting Vietnamese communist rule as “inhuman, vengeful and stupid,” in service of the “Russian neo-colonialist,” this political tract points to how the collapse of South Vietnam resulted in “nearly a million of our compatriots, with their hearts broken...[leaving] the homeland to become refugees abroad,” and in rejection of a “life of draft animals under the yoke of the Vietcong.”<sup>188</sup> The organization’s 1986 publication of *Anh Hùng Nước Tôi* [Heroes of My Country]—a book commemorating historical Vietnamese heroes and heroines—similarly blamed the return of war following the Geneva Accords on the collusion between “the Vietnamese communists and the French colonialists.”<sup>189</sup> In 1991, the Front’s “Political Proclamation” pointed to communist duplicity and treason in not only the 1954 political takeover of the northern half of the country, but also in 1946 when “Ho Chi Minh signed an agreement with the French” to gain power in North Vietnam. In collaboration with the French, the communists enacted a “bloodbath” to eliminate “obstacles to the expansion of the International Communist Movement.” The post-1975 refugee experience is cast as an extension of these atrocities when “over a million people of all professions have become refugees abroad, but another million have also been murdered trying to flee or have died at sea,” all to escape “Hanoi’s totalitarian rule.”<sup>190</sup>

The redeployment of familiar notions, terminologies, and historical elements of Republican anticommunism served a critical purpose for the political agenda of the Front and the Homeland Restoration movement. Core to Front activities during the era was the vision of sending cadres back to Indochina to engage in guerrilla war against the SRV. To do so, the organization relied on not only representing their organization as an overseas guerrilla army, but also how contemporary mobilization was a necessary and obvious response to suffering endured by the Vietnamese people. Just as the post-1975 exodus from Indochina marked but another chapter of how the Vietnamese fled communist rule, the movement to restore the homeland is another phase in a longer historical anticommunist “struggle.” Such a narration required that the Front present itself and the broader Homeland Restoration movement as something bound to the Republican past. As such the organization took efforts to present itself as an extension of South Vietnamese nationalism, relying on not only symbols and imagery of the Republic, but also the former state’s policies and programs for “national” development.

In 1982, its public relations arm published a political text which exemplifies how the organization sought to bound itself to the Republican anticommunist past. The pamphlet begins with the translated lyrics of the Republican national anthem. It is followed by various speeches from movement leaders, documentation of activities in popular support of the Front, and the outline of the organization’s political platform for the reconstruction of the country in the wake of successful overthrow of the communist regime. These tracts are accompanied by cartooned

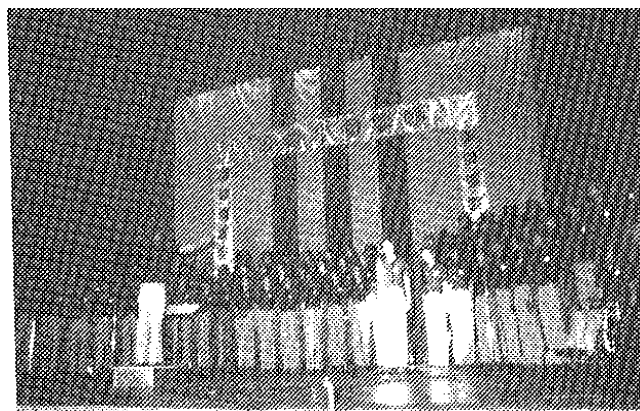
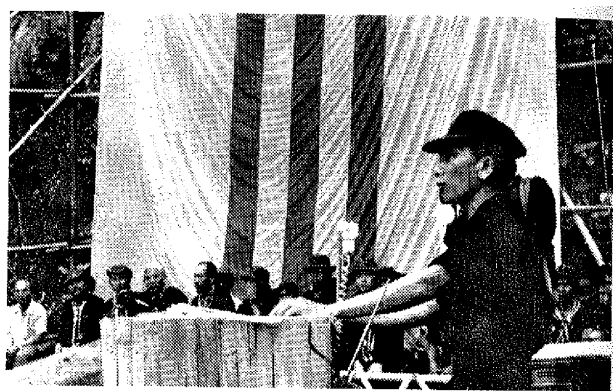
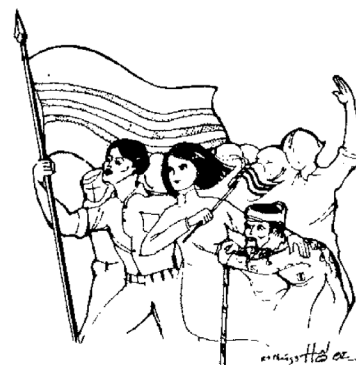
<sup>188</sup> “Political Program,” The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam, 1982.

<sup>189</sup> Mặt Trận Quốc Gia Thống Nhất Giải Phóng Việt Nam, *Anh Hùng Nước Tôi*, (Đông Tiến, 1986), 47.

<sup>190</sup> The National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam, “The 1991 Political Proclamation of The National United Front for the Liberation of Vietnam (NVFRONLIV),” 1991.

images featuring the Republican flag as a symbol of a unified, heroic resistance, and are followed by photographs depicting broad popular support for the movement at rallies and events. These photographs are replete with not only large crowds and participation of “ordinary” Vietnamese refugees, but also the attendance of Republican-era politicians and former officials.





In the pamphlet, the Front's vision for "national reconstruction" highlights how the Republican narrative of Vietnamese Underdevelopment was reapplied in the political imagination of the organization's activists. Reflecting the political promises of various regimes that emerged during the Republican era, the Front vowed to recreate an "independent, democratic, free, humane and prosperous Vietnam...[within] which citizens must be absolutely respected as human beings, well-fed and well-clad." This "reconstruction" program placed emphasis on the reestablishment of a "humane" society in Vietnam by "abolish[ing] forever all vestiges of class struggle in the domain of labor...[and promote] co-ownership...[and] cooperation" between management and workers. Like the modernizing vision once articulated through the Strategic Hamlet or the "new countryside" of the Thiệu era, rural areas would be "urbanized" so that the countryside would be provided the "comfort" historically afforded to the cities. In the realm of culture, the Front program promised to "rekindle, maintain and develop the national culture based on nationhood, humanity and open-mindedness." For education, a reconstructed Vietnam would emphasize "Patriotism, Morality, Community Spirit, Altruism." Marxist and communist literatures would be "eradicated, and texts articulating communist perspectives would only be used for scholastic examination of the communist's "cultural crimes...and to understand the darkest period of our nation's history." "Citizenship training" would resume to "form a new generation of honest, harmonious and disciplined citizens" who, of course, would be anticommunist.<sup>191</sup>

Reliance on ideological and political aspects of Republican past allowed the Front to present itself as a natural extension of the longer history of anticommunist "resistance" that began in South Vietnam. The pamphlet's section on the "Recent History of Viet-Nam" section starts with a depiction of the Vietnamese "resistance against the French colonialists," highlighting how the non-communist faction of the Vietnamese anti-colonialist movement were betrayed, "cheated," "killed or sold" off by the communists who "pretended" to be nationalists while in reality were ever "ready to betray the nation at any time." True to the Republican narrative on the Geneva Accords, the defeat of the French in the First Indochina War "led to an agreement between the French and Vietnamese Communists to divide the country" at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel. This section narrating the Vietnamese anti-colonialist resistance is followed by a section on "the new resistance against the inhuman Vietnamese communists," divided between the Second Indochina War (deemed "Nationalists versus Communists" in the text) and the post-1975 era (deemed "the People's Resistance against the Communists). The piece presents the Republican South as an extension of the non-communist nationalist movement, historically intent on "fighting against communist to protect freedom" for the people of Vietnam. This anticommunist "struggle" is then extended to the post-1975 era during which communist oppression has led to widespread "popular resistance" to communist rule. The document presents the Front as squarely within this tradition of "resistance."<sup>192</sup>

As argued, with the communist victory in 1975, Vietnam has "become a military base of the imperialists, our people the tool serving the ambition of Soviet Russia." Determined to oppose such a "miserable life of slaves," the piece argues that the Vietnamese people, both in the

<sup>191</sup> "The Political Program of the National United Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam," in *The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam: The National Support Movement for the Resistance in Viet-Nam*, (Overseas Department, Oct. 1, 1982), 15-25.

<sup>192</sup> "Recent History of Viet-Nam," in *The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam: The National Support Movement for the Resistance in Viet-Nam*, (Overseas Department, Oct. 1, 1982), 8.

homeland and abroad, have risen up through spontaneous rebellion “with a view toward violent overthrow of the brute rulers.” The success of this movement, however, has been limited because of the lack of a united leadership.<sup>193</sup> In response to this “need,” the document claims that the Front has emerged as the vehicle to rally, unify, and guide the disparate “resistance” groups. It promised to be an organization that would “always uphold the policy of the Unity of the people, regardless of social origin, political orientation, religion or ethnic background.” It called upon “all Vietnamese compatriots abroad” to participate in its programs and pushed for members of the Vietnamese Communist Party to defect. It promised to collaborate with the Laotian and Cambodian resistance group, viewing the “resistance” as a struggle for not only the liberation of Vietnam, but the protection of “the entire civilized, freedom and humanity-loving world.” Against this “inhuman” enemy that is communism, the Front intends to “build up combat units and armed propaganda teams...in order to prepare our people for the General Insurrection to eliminate the enemies.”<sup>194</sup>

In tandem with crafting itself as *the* representation of anticommunist “resistance,” the Front adopted a bellicostic appeal by presenting its insurgent operations as an extension of the former Republican armed forces. The Front, for example, regularly highlighted the former ranks and affiliation of its members to the Republican military in public communications. Such appeals to former status speak to the Front’s reliance on past structures of legitimacy and its attempt to popularize a narrative of continued anticommunist struggle. Certain individuals within the organization were also bestowed new military “ranks” and titles in the Front’s paramilitary operations. Rather than simply remaining a Vice-Admiral, Hoàng Cơ Minh was referred to as “General Minh” *Tướng Minh*. Đặng Quốc Hiền—a former major—who took the title of “Commander of the Armed Resistance Forces” *Tư Lệnh Lực Lượng Võ Trang Kháng Chiến*. Photographs of Front members training in jungle locations, reports of their skirmishes with communist forces in Indochina, and reference to their Thailand operational base as a “Resistance Zone” *Khu Kháng Chiến* further points to how the Front sought to present itself as an insurgent “commando” force.<sup>195</sup>

If Homeland Restoration politics in Vietnamese America became overtly militaristic during the 1980s, so were activities against those deemed “communist sympathizers” or “agents” who were allegedly “infiltrating” overseas communities. At least 14 cases of direct political violence against “communist sympathizers” occurred throughout the 1980s. Those targeted were, for the most part, journalists and activists who were perceived as lenient towards the Vietnamese communist regime, had criticized the Front, or published reports and opinions in contravention of Homeland Restoration politics. Publisher of the *Cái Đình Làng*, Dương Trọng Lâm, for example, was killed in July of 1981 because he had “belittled and criticized the National Restoration fighters who [were] fighting night and day to exterminate the Communists in out [sic] homeland.”<sup>196</sup> Nguyễn Đạm Phong was assassinated in 1982 for publishing articles

<sup>193</sup> “Recent History of Viet-Nam,” in *The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam: The National Support Movement for the Resistance in Viet-Nam*, (Overseas Department, Oct. 1, 1982), 9.

<sup>194</sup> *The National Front for the Liberation of Viet-Nam: The National Support Movement for the Resistance in Viet-Nam*, (Overseas Department, Oct. 1, 1982), 11-17.

<sup>195</sup> “Tiểu sử Hoàng Cơ Minh,” *Người Việt*, Oct. 14, 1981; “Bài nói chuyện của Tướng Đặng Quốc Hiền,” *Người Việt*, May 6, 1984; “‘Nhan Dan’ on ‘lamentable failure’ of ‘traitors,’” *BBC*, Oct. 17, 1990; William Branigin, “Hanoi tries 38 accused of trying to invade Vietnam,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 11, 1990.

<sup>196</sup> A. C. Thompson, “Terror in Little Saigon: An Old War Comes to a New Country,” *ProPublica*, Nov. 3, 2015;

denouncing the Front. Đoàn Văn Toại, who led a competing Homeland Restoration organization with the former communist guerrilla Trương Như Tảng, was seriously wounded after being shot in the back of the head in 1989. Triết Lê and his wife, Tuyết Thị Đàngtrần were assassinated in 1990 for alleging the Front of corruption. Violent activities against these individuals were justified by labeling them with familiar Republican anticommunist derogatory terms as “traitors” *Việt gian*, “communist sympathizers” *thân cộng* and “communist sleeper agents” *cộng sản nằm vùng*. Perhaps most notably, Nguyễn Văn Lũy—who had been a target of anticommunist harassment and intimidation since 1976—was shot and wounded in May 1984. His wife, Phạm Thị Lưu, however, was killed in the assassination attempt.<sup>197</sup>

During the 1980s, the escalation and violent nature of ideological policing within Vietnamese are, in part, a consequence of this militaristic shift in Homeland Restoration politics due to the ascension of the Front. As the Front rose into political prominence, it emboldened former veterans and popularized an overtly military solution to the problem of communism. Rather than limiting overseas activities to “support” of the “resistance” in the homeland, the Vietnamese exiles would now train for that resistance, lead that resistance, and engage in direct and violent combat against the communist enemy. As such, if men were fighting to “exterminate” the communists in the homeland, that same “extermination” must transpire in communities overseas. The need for popular support and singularity of political vision in enacting a successful guerrilla insurgency necessitated that oppositional voices within Vietnamese America be silenced. Under such conditions, the “military” reigned supreme and so did bellicose responses. The Front, now bestowed with that “mantle” of anticommunist legitimacy, had assumed the role of the anticommunist “state”—a monopolizer of “legitimate” violence—and opposition to the Front became equated with grievous betrayal of the anticommunist, “nationalist” ideology.

### *The Fall of Homeland Restoration*

While a bellicose strategy aided the ascension of the Front, it was, perhaps, also its downfall. In 1987, Hoàng Cơ Minh led an expedition of exiles to cross the Lao-Vietnam border. His contingent was ambushed by the Vietnamese military, leading to his death and the arrest of several of his resistance fighters. Eighteen were displayed on show trial and were imprisoned with lengthy sentences. Similar catastrophic setbacks were representative of the broader Homeland Restoration movement as a whole. Three years earlier, a contingent from Lê Quốc Túy’s Patriotic Forces had attempted a similar expedition. All 21 members of this contingent were captured.<sup>198</sup> Alongside successive military defeats for the overseas Homeland Restoration effort, the Third Indochina War was also coming to a close. Signs of eventual Soviet collapse had emerged in 1987 following Mikhail Gorbachev’s Perestroika policies. Sensing the possibility of a diplomatic settlement, the Socialist Republic began pulling its troops. By 1989, the last of

<sup>197</sup> Seth Mydans, “War Continues for Vietnam Refugees,” *New York Times*, Aug. 25, 1989; Ana Arana, “Targeted by Terrorists,” in *Silenced: The Unsolved Murders of Immigrant Journalists in the United States*, ed., Juan Gonzalez, (Committee to Protect Journalists, 1994), 9-26; Y Thien Nguyen, “Remaking the South Vietnamese Past in America,” *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 21:1(2018), 65-103.

<sup>198</sup> “Five sentenced to death in Vietnam,” *United Press International*, Dec. 8, 1984; “Vietnam commutes death sentences on convicted spies,” *BBC*, Jan. 4, 1985; Quảng Đổ, “Kế hoạch CM 12-Tương kế tựu kế, lấy địch đánh địch,” *Nhân Dân*, August 8, 2015, <<http://www.nhandan.com.vn/chinhtri/item/27111102-ke-hoach-cm-12-tuong-ke-tuu-ke-lay-dich-danh-dich.html>>.

the Vietnamese occupation had left Cambodia.<sup>199</sup> A younger generation of Vietnamese Americans were also making their voices heard, put off by the secrecy of the Front and the Homeland Restoration strategy of violent overthrow. Even former Front leaders, like Phạm Văn Liễu, turned away from prospects of guerrilla insurgency in the homeland.<sup>200</sup> And perhaps the final nail in the Front's coffin were the allegations of corruption and abuse of monetary donations.<sup>201</sup> While the Front itself did not recognize the death of their leader until 2001,<sup>202</sup> others picked up the story and shed doubt on the Front.<sup>203</sup> According to a report in 1990, "many overseas Vietnamese think Minh is dead and that the Front is lying to keep the organization alive—and the donations flowing in."<sup>204</sup>

While the Front and the Homeland Restoration politics clearly weakened as the 90's neared the corner, Human Rights activism, which had taken a backseat during the era of the Front, reemerged as the dominant voice for Vietnamese America's anticommunist politics. Rather than advocating for violent overthrow, in August of 1993, the Vietnamese anticommunist leadership met and announced a "new" political project: demanding free elections and "toppling communism in Vietnam through public pressure and internal dissent." The organizer of this event was the Vietnam Restoration Party [Tổ Chức Phục Hưng Việt Nam], which had once operated underground. A statement by Trần Quốc Bảo, the chairman of the organization, illustrates the impact of the recent collapse of communist states: "It [peaceful change] happened in other parts of the world. Only a few communist countries are hanging on—China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam."<sup>205</sup> A major protest by Vietnamese Americans that September demanded that the US embargo not be lifted until free elections are secured in Vietnam.<sup>206</sup> In the months leading to normalization, even staunch anti-communists were expressing a different attitude. "Maybe we can introduce ideas of democracy and human rights to Vietnam", said Loann Nguyen, who previously opposed the idea of establishing ties. The shift to market economy in Vietnam led entrepreneurs to view the SRV in a fundamentally different light. Normalization seemed inevitable, and many saw opportunities for businesses in Vietnam.<sup>207</sup> Perhaps the most significant sign of such a shift was that the Front changed its name to the "Việt Tân" (Vietnam Reform Party) in 2004. Its goals shifted from violent overthrow to "establish democracy and reform the country through peaceful means."<sup>208</sup>

<sup>199</sup>Sheila McNulty, "Anti-Communist Vietnamese Insurgents Found in Cambodia," *The Associated Press*, August 31, 1992.

<sup>200</sup> Ken McLaughlin, "Vietnam Resistance Faces Generation Gap," *San Jose Mercury News*, Oct. 29, 1990.

<sup>201</sup> Peter Carey and Ken McLaughlin, "Vietnamese Fund-Raisers Indicted Here," *San Jose Mercury News*, April 23, 1991.

<sup>202</sup> Jessie Mangaliman, "SJ Vietnamese Group Admits Leader's Death Fourteen Years after the Fact," *San Jose Mercury News*, July 29, 2001.

<sup>203</sup> Triet Le and writers from *Van Nghe Tien Phong* were among many who picked up the story. These individuals faced violent reprisal for their, often scathing, reports during the late 1980s. See also: Cao Thế Dung, *Mặt Trận: Những Sự Thật Chưa Hề Được Kể* (Văn Hóa, 1991).

<sup>204</sup> Ken McLaughlin, "Vietnam Resistance Faces Generation Gap," *San Jose Mercury News*, Oct. 29, 1990.

<sup>205</sup> Cheryl Downney, "Reforms; Vietnamese Want Elections in their Homeland; Meeting in County Seeks to Topple Communist Regime," *Orange County Register*, Aug. 12, 1993.

<sup>206</sup> Ann Pepper, "Demonstrators call for democracy in Vietnam," *Orange County Register*, Sep. 6, 1993.

<sup>207</sup> De Tran and Ken McLaughlin, "Many Emigres in South Bay Looking Ahead Changed Thoughts," *San Jose Mercury News*, July 12, 1995.

<sup>208</sup> [www.viettan.org](http://www.viettan.org)

*Republican Anticommunism and Contemporary Vietnamese America*

By the 2000's, Vietnamese America was becoming a political force within mainstream American politics. Tony Lam had become the first Vietnamese American to hold political office in 1992.<sup>209</sup> In the decades that followed, slews of Vietnamese Americans would come to hold positions in local city councils, as congressional representatives, mayors, and even Assistant Attorney General of the United States.<sup>210</sup> Electoral participation by Vietnamese Americans had been evident since the 1980s. However, with the collapse of the Homeland Restoration movement, various Vietnamese Americans organizations emerged with an explicit design for electoral mobilization. For example, the Federation of Overseas Free Vietnamese Communities (FOFVIC) founded in San Jose in 1995 points to a turn towards mainstream American politics for inducing political change in Vietnam. The FOFVIC, in particular, laid out a program calling for gaining political influence within the United States and internationally. While the organization sought to “erase the regime and the structure of Communism in Vietnam,” its strategy was to “encourage the citizenship drives, election registering, and providing guidance” for participation in mainstream American politics.<sup>211</sup> Mobilization by groups such as these allowed Vietnamese American to gain electoral clout, rising from a registered voter count of 4.1% during the 1980s to a turnout of some 80% during the Obama-Romney election in 2012.<sup>212</sup>

Increased electoral participation has allowed Vietnamese Americans to acquire a degree of political clout, which in turn has led to the instituting of certain aspects of Republican anticommunism in a number of locales. The “golden yellow” flag of the former Republic is a prime example. First instituted in 2003 in the city of Westminster, the former Republican flag is now widely acknowledged as the official symbol of Vietnamese Americans overseas. By 2009, some 77 states, counties, and cities across the United States and Australia had adopted resolutions conferring this symbol of Republican anticommunism as the “Vietnamese Freedom and Heritage Flag.”<sup>213</sup> Beyond symbolic representation, certain policies reflect the anticommunist adamancy of the community. In 2004, Garden Grove and Westminster became ratified as “no-communist zones,” barring visits from representatives of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. A 14-day minimum notice is required from any visiting Vietnamese communists, and

<sup>209</sup> “A Vietnamese-American becomes a political first,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 16, 1992.

<sup>210</sup> In 2001, Viet Dinh becomes the first Vietnamese American Assistant Attorney General of the United States (“President Bush announced his intention to nominate two individuals to serve in his administration,” *US Newswire*, Mar. 1, 2001. In 2008 Westminster, CA had its first Vietnamese-majority city council (“Westminster becomes first US city with Vietnamese majority rule,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, Dec. 2, 2008). And in 2009, Joseph Cao became the first Vietnamese American congressman (“Joseph Cao’s rise to Congress,” *NBC News*, Jan. 6, 2009).

<sup>211</sup> “Dự án công tác cụ thể của cộng đồng người Việt quốc gia hải ngoại từ nay cho đến cuối năm 1995,” *Hải Ngoại*, No. 1, Aug. 12, 1995. By 2017, the organization had upwards of 3,800 chapters worldwide (“3862 ban đại diện cộng đồng người Việt quốc gia hải ngoại (kỹ sư bùi thế phát) họp kháng đại cộng đồng,” *Việt Báo*, Mar. 21, 2017. In April 2020, the Federation organized the first “virtual commemoration” of Black April amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Roxana Kopetman, “Vietnamese community to hold first virtual commemoration of ‘Fall of Saigon’ due to coronavirus,” *Orange County Register*, Apr. 30, 2020).

<sup>212</sup> Nakanishi, Don T. “UCLA Asian Pacific American Voter Registration Study”. Sponsored by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, 1986; APIA Vote, NAAS, and Asian American Justice Center, “Behind the Numbers: Post-Election Survey of Asian American and Pacific Islander Voters in 2012,” (National Asian American Survey, 2012).

<sup>213</sup> Hiroko Furuya and Christian Collet, “Contested Nation: Vietnam and the Emergence of Saigon Nationalism in the United States,” in *The Transnational Politics of Asian Americans* (eds., Christian Collet and Pei-Te Lien), (Temple University Press, 2009), 67.

all requests must go through the local police chief of these cities.<sup>214</sup> “Heroes” of the Homeland Restoration movement have also been given honors. Trần Văn Bá was one of 21 who were captured in 1984 by the attempting to infiltrate Vietnam and was summarily executed among two others by the SRV. In 2007, he was given posthumously the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom Award at the Hungarian Embassy in the United States. A memorial in Leige, Belgium and a street in Falls Church, Virginia are dedicated to him.<sup>215</sup> Vietnamese Americans have also sought to prevent the passage of laws that they deemed to be sympathetic to communism. Bill AB-22, proposed in 2017, would allow members of communist parties to hold office in California. Fierce mobilization by Vietnamese Americans in the state forced Rob Bonta, a California state assemblyman, to drop the bill.<sup>216</sup> Protests and demonstrations are also regularly waged by Vietnamese Americans to protest the visit of communist leaders from China and Vietnam, or demand human rights and reforms in their homeland.<sup>217</sup>

The fact that Vietnamese America is so politically mobilized and had acquired such political clout can be seen as a consequence of how Republican anticommunism was retooled in the post-1975 era. The political organizations, media forums, and mobilizing infrastructure that Vietnamese American rely upon today had been developed and instituted since the very earliest days of the community. The two movements of Homeland Restoration and Human Rights discussed at the beginning of this chapter established the political foundations of this community. It is not uncommon to attend a Vietnamese American gathering and see men in South Vietnamese uniform, singing the Republican anthem or standing to attention before an ancestral altar. Songs like Phạm Duy’s “Việt Nam, Việt Nam,” which protestors sang in the 1980s, can still be heard in contemporary Vietnamese American political gatherings. Indeed, informed by a collective discourse that had been politically, ideologically, and culturally “consolidated” during the Republican era, these political movements generated massive mobilization within the Vietnamese refugee communities, generating the political and cultural vibrancy of the community. As such, the fact that today’s Vietnamese American political activists fly the national symbol of the Republic, sing the Republican national anthem, and deploy Republican-era terminologies and narrative is a consequence of a historical process that had carried a former state-ideology from halfway around the globe to inform and shape the construction of an overseas Vietnamese community.

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<sup>214</sup> Mai Tran and Monte Morin, “Welcome to Our Cities, Unless You’re Communist,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 2004; David Haldane, “The Region; Garden Grove Oks measure opposing visits by Vietnamese Communists” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2004.

<sup>215</sup> “Tù nhân được thả sau 33 năm,” *BBC-Vietnamese*, July 12, 2010.

<sup>216</sup> “Cư dân Little Saigon ‘dứt khoát không mở đường cho cộng sản,’” *Người Việt*, May 11, 2017; Chris Haire, “Little Saigon upset over California Bill that would prohibit the firing of state workers who are Communist Party members,” *Orange Count Register*, May 17, 2017; Guy Marzorati, “Oakland Assemblyman Drops Bill to Allow Communists in State Government,” May 18, 2017.

<sup>217</sup> Protest against Nguyễn Phú Trọng’s (General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party) visit in 2015: Thanh Trúc, “Biểu tình tước Nhà Trắng phân đối TBT Nguyễn Phú Trọng,” *RFA Vietnamese*, July 7, 2015; “Obama pledges to visit Vietnam during meeting with Communist Party Chief,” David Nakamura, *The Washington Post*, July 7, 2015. Human rights protests: Thanh Quang, “Người Mỹ Gốc Việt biểu tình đòi tự do, dân chủ, nhân quyền cho Việt Nam,” *RFA Vietnamese*, July 25, 2013; Việt Long, “Cuộc biểu dương cho nhân quyền VN tại Tòa Bạch Ốc,” *RFA Vietnamese*, Mar. 5, 2012; “Biểu tình đòi nhân quyền cho Việt nam tại thủ đô mỹ (VOA),” *VOA Tiếng Việt*, May 14, 2018, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncBdWwAy-xU>>.

As Linda Vo once noted, “homeland politics is still of primary importance and adopting fervent anti-communism ideologies is still mandatory” in Vietnamese America.<sup>218</sup> The boundaries of the community continue to be policed, as evident in the case of the Hi-Tek Video store in 1999, or against Andover representative Trâm Nguyễn who came out in support of Black Lives Matter during the recent election cycle. Such ideological policing is even enacted against public figures who do not necessarily belong to the Vietnamese American community. Jeff LeTourneau, vice-chair of the Orange County Democratic Party, for example, was forced to resign in September 2020 after facing backlash for a Facebook post that glorified Ho Chi Minh as a liberator of the Vietnamese people. Representing Ho Chi Minh—or any Vietnamese communist leader—as such stands in direct contrast to how Vietnamese history is articulated and interpreted through the Republican anticommunist discourse. Because such a discourse lies at the core of the community’s identity, such an argument bred the vehemently rejection and protestation on the part of the Vietnamese Americans. As such, LeTourneau’s post—or any other cases that appeared sympathetic to Vietnamese communism—is taken as a defilement of Vietnamese America itself.<sup>219</sup>

As have been demonstrated in previous chapters, Republican anticommunism was the defining political and ideological characteristic of South Vietnam. First formed, institutionalized, and propagated by the Republican state, it became “consolidated” within the broader South Vietnamese society and served as the ideological foundation of what constituted a “Vietnamese” nation. In this chapter, I have argued that, rather than disappearing into the historical abyss following the collapse of the Republican state, Republican anticommunism has migrated along with Vietnamese refugee bodies onto the shores of the United States. This former state-ideology became reutilized by Vietnamese refugees and informed their early political mobilization around issues of “Human Rights” and “Homeland Restoration”—issues which directly responded to the refugee’s collective experience of national loss and mass dislocation. Through this mobilization process, Republican anticommunism became reinstated as a dominant ideological and interpretive framework for a budding overseas community. As a collective discourse, Republican anticommunism provided the groundwork for the cultural and ethnic identity of Vietnamese Americans, (re)generated political and cultural life for exiles overseas, and established the boundaries for collective belonging. Republican anticommunism in Vietnamese America—as with Republican Vietnam—nurtured what is ideologically valued while vehemently (and at times, violently) “exterminating” what is not. In this sense, what we now call “Vietnamese America” was founded upon this reutilization and re-mobilization of Republican anticommunism. As argued at the beginning of this dissertation, the process of making Vietnamese America entailed not only the refugee journey that brought the Vietnamese people into the United States, but also that long history of nation-state formation which provided the ideological precursors for an overseas Vietnamese identity. A community created and shaped

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<sup>218</sup> Linda Vo, “Vietnamese American Trajectories: Dimensions of Diaspora,” *Amerasia Journal*, 29, no.1 (2003): ix-xviii.

<sup>219</sup> “Diedre Nguyễn và 4 dân biểu liên bang yêu cầu Đảng Dân Chủ Quận Cam cách chức Jeff LeTourneau,” *Viễn Đông Daily News*, Sep. 1, 2020; Đăng Giao, “Lãnh đạo Dân Chủ Orange County ca ngợi Hồ Chí Minh, bị yêu cầu từ chức,” *Người Việt*, Sep. 2, 2020; Ashley Ludwig, “Democratic Party Leader Jeff LeTourneau Resigns Amid Criticism,” *Patch*, Sep. 4, 2020.



through political mobilization around a reconfigured Republican anticommunist ideology, Vietnamese America is, in every sense, defined by the ideological legacies of that Southern Republic.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation concludes with brief summaries of the argument made in each part of the dissertation. The conclusion then moves to outline three main themes of this dissertation regarding Republican anticommunism as a “hegemonic ideology.” I argue that the dissertation has demonstrated a) the tenacity of hegemonic ideas, b) the adaptive deployment of these ideas, and c) that the persistence of hegemonic ideas is explained, in part, by their continued “relevance” for contemporary actors. I conclude with statements on what the ideological resiliency of Republican anticommunism means for the generation of progressives in Vietnamese America today and what the arguments made in this dissertation imply about the Vietnamese American future.

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In the introduction of this dissertation, I had laid out the argument for a socio-historical examination of what I call “Republican anticommunism.” I argued that despite the importance of anticommunism in understanding contemporary Vietnamese American politics, the ideology remains poorly understood in existing scholastic and non-scholastic discussions alike. My historical examination of Republican anticommunism hoped to demonstrate how anticommunism in Vietnamese America is less an obvious or natural reaction to the Vietnamese refugee’s loss of homeland or forced dislocation than it is a recalibration of discourses and narratives originating from a national formation process in South Vietnam. As such, I have used the descriptive “Republican” to point to both the historical origins of the ideology, as well as the kind of nation to which people who deploy that ideology aspires. Across the 10 preceding chapters, this dissertation has traced “Republican anticommunism” from its origins in the First Republic of Vietnam (1954-1963), to its reapplication during the Interregnum (1964-1967), to its transformations under the Second Republic (1967-1975), and, finally, to its migration to Vietnamese communities overseas. As such, the historical narrative I have laid out is one of discursive change within continuity.

By narrating the political and discursive history of this ideology, the dissertation hoped to demonstrate how “Republican anticommunism”—despite the chaos, regime changes, and political instability across a period of civil war—has persisted and endured. I have argued that this persistence derives from the ideology’s continued relevance to historical actors in South Vietnam and Vietnamese America. Although originating from the Republican state, the ideology has been transformed and modified through continuous use and reuse by historical actors. This discourse, on the one hand, has been deployed (and continues to be deployed) in modular and complex ways to interpret, frame, and narrate the realities of South Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans. On the other hand, as a political discourse, the ideology was a powerful mobilizing tool for state and non-state actors alike during the Republican era, subjected to deployment in diverse and, at times, oppositional ends. It was supported and reinforced through state power, forms of social control, legislation, and other tools meant to generate and sustain popular loyalty to an anticommunist Vietnamese nation. In Vietnamese America, this ideology was reinforced through social movements and political organizations that deploy the ideology for mobilization around refugee causes while simultaneously policing the political boundaries of exilic belonging. As a socially pervasive body of knowledge, Republican anticommunism has informed not only the formation and reformation of state across the Republican era, but it has also shaped the political character of a Vietnamese Republican nation and its culture. It was this socio-historical,

ideological construct that Vietnamese refugees—essentially former citizens of the Republic—brought with them in their “flight” from the homeland following Saigon’s collapse. And it was this political-cultural ideology that has shaped how Vietnamese Americans constructed their community overseas and, as a defining element of Vietnamese American identity, continues to influence the politics of the community today.

Drawing upon existing literature on nation-state formation and ideology, I have presented a theory articulating how ideas derived from the state become hegemonic and “consolidated” within a broader society. The dissertation has utilized the “Political Study Program” (PSP) of the Vietnamese Republican state as an empirical foundation for demonstrating this historical process. In Part I, I have discussed how the PSP served as a tool for citizen/subject-formation across the entirety of the Republican era. Explicitly designed to inculcate state values into the “minds” and “spirit” of the state’s civil servants, soldiers, cadres, and its citizens, the PSP served a “pedagogical” purpose through which people living in the Republic acquire, become acquainted, and are familiarized to the ideas and discourses deriving from the Republican state. This was done through systematic and routine “study” of ideological texts produced and distributed by the Ministry of Information (and its affiliated organs) across the Republican era. While the degree to which state ideas successfully penetrate the Republican society vary geographically and temporally, the Republican state’s ability to centralize, regularize, and control the flow of information made Republican anticommunist narratives like those taught in the PSP widespread and reflective of broader discussions circulating within the Republican society at large.

Part II of the dissertation examined three foundational Republican anticommunist “narratives” taught through the PSP. The first this dissertation has called the “Geneva Narrative,” dispensed a historical interpretation of the root causes of the war, framed Vietnamese suffering, and provided caricatures, terminologies, and assumptions about Vietnamese communism and communists. The second is the “Narrative of Anti-Neutrality.” This narrative explains why South Vietnam could not become a “neutral” party in the Cold War, both diplomatically and domestically. In the realm of foreign affairs, the narrative was deployed to articulate why South Vietnam should not and could not be “neutralized”—that is to join the Non-Alignment Movement like other developing nations. Internally, the narrative was utilized to muster ideological “resoluteness” against any forms of communist sympathies and justify the “extermination” of communist ideas and organizations, as well as individuals deemed to be agents of communism. Last, Part II discusses the narrative of “Vietnamese Underdevelopment” which outlined the “unique” challenges facing a Vietnamese Republican nation: namely, conditions of economic and societal “backwardness,” while simultaneously the nation must cope with military hostilities from the Communist North as well as the guerilla insurgency in South Vietnam. In this narrative, communism is the primary hindrance to economic progress and modernization in Vietnam, and, during the First Republic, Personalism was articulated as a state philosophy for combatting both communism and “underdevelopment.” Each of these narratives found their origins during the First Republic of Vietnam, and, although the First Republic would end in 1963, these narratives continue to persist, manifesting in different ways and with varying degrees of influence during the Republican Interregnum and into the Second Republic.

The fact that these narratives persisted despite the collapse of the regime which had given birth to them highlights one of the central themes of this dissertation: *the tenacity of hegemonic ideas*. Hegemonic ideologies, as have been defined in the introduction of this dissertation, are

those bodies of beliefs, narratives, and assumptions that are widespread, dominant, and taken-for-granted within a given society. Hegemonic ideas are reinforced by structures of power, and through political actors who have political and material interests in maintaining and promulgating these ideas. In the case of South Vietnam, the primary structure under discussion is the Republican state. In chapter 1 and 2, I have discussed the importance of the Republican Ministry of Information (and its various manifestations) in propagating and disseminating Republican anticommunist texts and messages. While anticommunist messages were promoted by the various regimes that had risen (and fell) across the Republican era, dissenting ideas—particularly those that can be interpreted as “communist,” “neutralist,” or “communist sympathetic”—were systematically censored and weeded out from public consumption. As such, the Republican state played a key role in generating a political-cultural environment within which anticommunism flourished and developed. Various state-initiated programs and campaigns (such as the sponsoring of anticommunist literatures during the Communist Denunciation Campaign, or promotion of commemorative activities during the Interregnum’s “Day of National Resentment”) give form to the way that the Republican state advanced anticommunist agendas.

Since the First Republic, Republican anticommunism was a hegemonic ideology. Certain political notions that originated from the Republican state (such as the 1954 Geneva Accords was a “collusion between the Vietnamese communists and the French colonialists” or that neutralism was simply a “scheme” that would “open the road for eventual communist takeover”) became ideological refrains repeated time and time again in not only in state messages, but also in popular discourses and public forums. Part III of the dissertation had reinforced the argument that Republican anticommunism had become “hegemonic” in South Vietnam. The dissertation utilized the understudied historical period of the Republican Interregnum to demonstrate how state narratives created, developed, and propagated under the First Republic continues to be utilized by both state and non-state actors despite the collapse of Diệm administration. Most notably, the narrative of Anti-Neutralism was a determining factor in not only the fate of administrations like that of Nguyễn Ngọc Thơ and Phan Huy Quát, but also that of “radical” political endeavors like the Struggle Movement and “People’s National Salvation Council” originating from Huế. Similarly, one finds the continuity of these narratives in the community formation process in Vietnamese America. Rather than becoming obscure or obsolete following the fall of Saigon, Republican anticommunism was carried over from South Vietnam to newly emerging Vietnamese exile communities. As the previous chapter has shown, Republican anticommunism shaped the “community formation” of Vietnamese America, giving rise to how the movements for Homeland Restoration and Human Rights were articulated and interpreted by Vietnamese exile actors. These movements, in turn, aided in instituting a collective, overseas Vietnamese identity. The effects of these narratives are still experienced in Vietnamese America today.

Hegemonic ideologies like that Republican anticommunism are resilient precisely because of their widespread and prevalent nature. These ideologies penetrate not only the realm of high politics, but also popular culture and collective discourse. Hegemonic ideas, on the one hand, seep into the culture of a collectivity, informing how individuals compose music, write literature, perform theatre, and the like. On the other hand, hegemonic ideas exist as that common “background” upon which political actors make claims. This “background” knowledge persists because it is something to which actors must appeal, harken, and reference in order to

demonstrate their ideological, moral, and political belonging within a community. As such, the narratives that constitute hegemonic ideas are often repeated time and time again. Certain political phrases, ideological notions, and terminologies are continuously deployed to conjure an imagined linkage between a political claim by a group of actors and the political legitimacy of shared discourse. One finds during the Republican Interregnum the assumed need by actors to validate themselves as “anticommunists” in order to be politically effective. In Vietnamese America, referencing anticommunist symbols and commonly accepted anticommunist notions aided in the legitimizing political exile groups.

Hegemonic ideas, because of their penetration into the broader culture and the lives of those within a given society, can survive long after the death of any single regime or state. Ultimately, narratives and ideas may be created, propagated, and reinforced by states, but discourses, once prevalent, do not exclusively belong to them. As such, the persistence of hegemonic ideologies like Republican anticommunism is, in part, explained by their diverse *use* and *reuse*. This brings us to the second central theme of this dissertation: ***hegemonic ideologies can be adaptively deployed***. The narratives of the Geneva Accords, Anti-Neutralism, and Vietnamese Underdevelopment did not survive in its completeness. That is, significant changes were made to each of these narratives since their inception during the First Republic. Whole narratives are broken up into disparate parts, and elements that are relevant to contemporary issues are magnified while those that are less so become obscure. During the early months of the Republican Interregnum, for example, anti-neutralism was deployed externally and directed at France and Charles De Gaulle. During this period, Anti-Neutralism was an expression of Vietnamese “independence,” melding anti-colonialist nationalism with fervent adance against the “neutralization” of Indochina. The usage of anti-neutralism to police the boundaries of the nation only became significantly apparent after the conservative reaction to radicalism originating from Central Vietnam. Similarly, Personalism transformed from a state philosophy for the modernization of South Vietnam into something far more obscure following the collapse of the First Republic. Demonized during the Interregnum, Personalism was stripped of its rhetorical trappings during the Second Republic and while aspects of Personalist-inspired state building programs—such as urbanization of the countryside or the “spiritual” molding of citizens—persisted, they are of minor relevance for the administration of Nguyễn Văn Thiệu.

Changes in historical conditions pave way for changes in discursive use. As such, during the Republican Interregnum, groups which opposed each other drew on the same discourse to validate themselves and demonize their opponents. Various Interregnum regimes would lambast protesting groups as communist-inspired or enact repression, arguing that civil unrest would lead to communist overthrow. At the same time, these “oppositional” groups would vilify despised national leaders as “neutralists” or argue that the government was not anticommunist enough. Most significantly, Republican anticommunism was retooled to speak to the ideal of “True Freedom and Democracy.” Anticommunism—rather than defined as expanded war and increase in military capabilities—was articulated for pushing democratic reforms and instituting civil liberties. As argued by those who championed a “civil” resolution to the war, making South Vietnam “truly” democratic was the best means for defeating communism. In Vietnamese America, Republican anticommunism was once again recalibrated to speak to the conditions of being a refugee. Elements of communist denunciation which were core the Geneva Narrative was redeployed for Human Rights mobilization; expectations of mass opposition to communist

rule inspired the imaginations of Homeland Restoration activists; and Anti-Neutrality informed the adamant ideological policing of the community.

If hegemonic ideologies survive because of their changeability and diversity of use, that survivability is a product of the applicability of these ideas to the lives of actors. That is, ideas survive because they can speak meaningfully to the lived realities of people located in specific time and place. This brings us to the third central theme of this dissertation: *Hegemonic ideas persist because they are of relevance to those who use them*. What ultimately matters about ideological “relevance” is less the actual functional “utility” of these ideas, but rather that they are *perceived* as such. For example, maintaining “resoluteness” against communism may not actually rid a society of communism, but Anti-Neutrality survived because South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American actors believed that such “resoluteness” was of the utmost importance. Similarly, whether “denunciation” of communist “atrocities” actually resulted in changing the minds of any individual or simply served to reinforce assumptions that were already there is beside the point. What matters is that historical actors view “communist denunciation” as a politically and ideologically necessity.

The discursive history presented through this dissertation has been about the interpretive relevance of Republican anticommunism for the people who deploy them. Specifically, Republican anticommunism is ideologically valued and relied upon by South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American actors. The discourse provided a way to frame and narrate a collective experience about war, modernity, nationhood and, eventually, mass dislocation. Because historical actors deploy Republican anticommunism to address these collective and historical experiences of the group, Republican anticommunism is at the core of this group’s identity. Republican anticommunism is “relevant” in that it provides a constructive comprehension of the death, devastation, and nation-building endeavors for a South Vietnamese nation. In Vietnamese America, it provided a way to interpret the loss of homeland, forced dislocation, and the presence of a Vietnamese community overseas. As a collectively shared body of beliefs, Republican anticommunism aided to build and reinforce a notion of collectivity and gave meaning and value to that collectivity. As such, it is a collective myth that unifies actors and a set of practical and discursive “knowledge” which allow these actors to “carry on.”<sup>1</sup>

However, Vietnamese America today looks quite differently from what it did during the 1980s and, undoubtedly, the community is entirely different from what was South Vietnam. The question emerges as to the degree that anticommunism will continue to remain “relevant” in the Vietnamese American future. Contemporary progressive issues permeate the politics of the younger generation who would soon take central stage within the community. For many contemporary political commentators, the political landscape and views of the community will change and become increasingly attuned to more progressive forms of politics.<sup>2</sup> Yet, even as progressive voices arise with the community, the hold of Republican anticommunism continues to exert itself, as evident in the most recent Presidential election. Activists in support of the

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens: Making Sense of Modernity*, (Polity Press, 1998), 74; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, (Polity Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Farai Chideye, “Vietnamese-Americans Are No Longer A Lock for the Republican Party,” *FiveThirtyEight*, Oct. 18, 2016; Kat Chow, “Asian Americans Continue to Drift Away from The GOP, But It’s A Complicated Story,” *NPR: Code Switch*, Oct. 12, 2016; Terry Nguyen, “Support for Trump is tearing apart Vietnamese American families,” *Vox*, Oct. 30, 2020.

Trump campaign have deployed Republican anticommunism in mobilizing support within the community and they have done so effectively. This support, however, does not mean that Republican anticommunism somehow automatically lends itself to the type of white populism evident in Trumpian politics—as has been implied by one scholar.<sup>3</sup>

As I have emphasized above, the form that Republican anticommunism takes is a consequence of discursive use. It is a collective interpretive framework that has been subjected to diverse deployment across South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American history. As the Republican Interregnum has shown, anticommunism can be deployed to demand civil liberties, social justice, and democratic practices. It has been utilized both for and against state repression. Republican anticommunist politicians have pushed “social progress,” expressed anti-racism and anti-colonialism, and championed political solidarity between anticommunist countries in the Third World. At its crux, however, Republican anticommunism—like any other ideologies—rests upon structures of coercion and power, stipulating belonging and political identification. As such, how Republican anticommunism is defined, interpreted, and “legitimately” deployed is a product of those who are seen as having the authority to speak for this ideology. This has often meant persons with material and political stake in its maintenance and perpetuation—namely regimes and political movements whose legitimacy derive from the ideology itself.

As a new generation of Vietnamese Americans take the political stage, they will have the voice and ability to redefine what “Republican anticommunism” means and, ultimately, reshape the “identity” of this community. It is up to this generation whether they will find “relevance” in such a discourse. Republican anticommunism may be something that slowly fade into obscurity because of political actors of today no longer find it “relevant.” Republican anticommunism, also, may continue to become “relevant” only in that it takes the form of some outdated, “reactionary” or conservative ideology against which the community must rally against. However, given the discussion in this dissertation, another scenario is plausible. Anticommunism can be retooled and reconfigured—as have been done across South Vietnamese and Vietnamese American history—into something that addresses contemporary issues of racism, poverty, and social inequality plaguing the community today. Anticommunism may eventually come to mean creating a democratic overseas community upon which “oppositional” voices are heard and respected to distinguish the community from the “authoritarianism” of Vietnamese communist rule. It may mean “bringing Human Rights home,” finding commonalities with other refugees and migrant groups, or actualizing an overseas community that values the “personhood” of those within the community rather than subjecting individuals to ideological coercion.<sup>4</sup>

What this new generation confronts is not the “old generation,” *per se*, but rather a mode of political engagement that revolves around rigid, if at times violent, maintenance of ideological and political boundaries. As a hegemonic ideology, Republican anticommunism has forces within the community that seeks to sustain that ideology and police how individuals can and must engage. It is a power structure that confers legitimacy upon certain strata within

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<sup>3</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen posted a public commentary on November 22, 2020 via Facebook, arguing that the Republic of Vietnam was “fascist” and “corrupt.” He further goes on to argue: “That the majority of Vietnamese Americans support Donald Trump should, in the end, be no surprise at all. They were always comfortable with authoritarianism and fascism, and the racism that goes along with it, from the very beginning.” <<https://www.facebook.com/vietnguyenauthor/posts/216254196525707>>.

<sup>4</sup> See: Tracy La, “La: We Were Also Told to ‘Go Back,’ It’s time for Vietnamese-American Electeds to ‘Bring Human Rights Home,’” *Voice of OC*, July 22, 2019.



Vietnamese America; namely, men and women who have proven themselves to be “resolute” against communism or those who can mostly eloquently articulate communist “atrocities.” These had been former military men or political leaders who had made their career in South Vietnam. For the generation of Vietnamese American progressives, the issue will be in seizing that “mantle of righteousness” within the community and making their own vision of Vietnamese America a reality. Whether Republican anticommunism will remain part of that vision is a story that only the future can tell. That future may be one in which Republican anticommunism transforms into something that retains its “relevance,” while simultaneously serving a progressive, anti-racist, social justice agenda. The story that I have told is of an ever changing, adaptive body of beliefs that had originated as a state ideology but had transformed into a diversely applied form of social knowledge. This story points to that possibility.

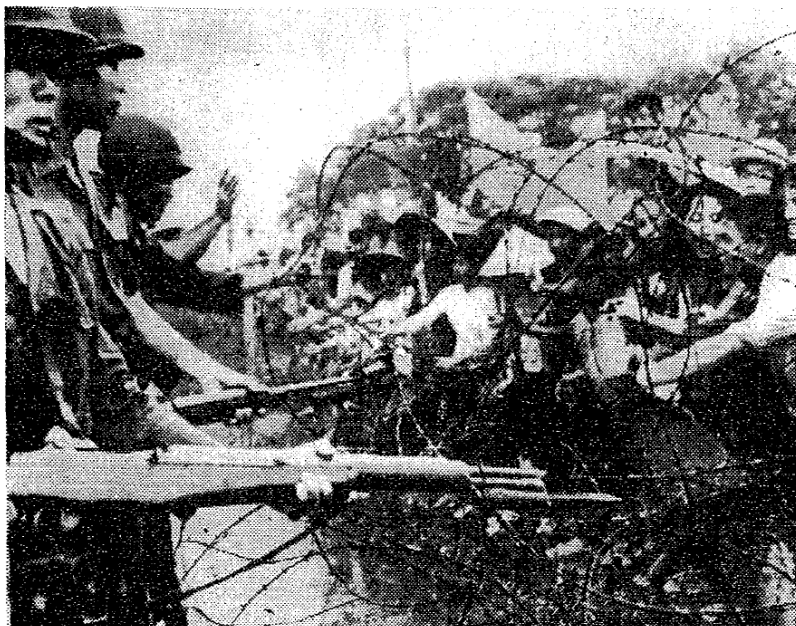
### Vesak Holiday in Saigon, 1964



### Protest against the Vũng Tàu Charter, 1964



**STUDENTS DEMONSTRATE**—Shouting students in Saigon hold a burning piece of paper labeled "Khanh's Constitution" as 30,000 persons protested in South Vietnam Tuesday.



**CONFRONTATION IN SAIGON:** Demonstrators threatening headquarters of South Vietnam's military council shortly before troops opened fire to quell the uprising.



**Firemen attempt to break up street fighting between Buddhists and Catholics in Saigon**

## 1966 Struggle Movement



Associated Press Wirephotos

**Woman Leads 500 Youths in Anti-Government Demonstration**



(UPI Telephoto)

Standing behind a crude barricade, South Viet Nam soldiers loyal to government of Premier Ky guard a Da Nang street leading to the air base built by Americans while a mob of civilians ap-

proaches. The premier flew from Saigon to Da Nang, accompanied by about 3,000 Viet Nam marines in American planes. Ky met with Buddhist leaders, issued an apology, and returned to Saigon.



[AP Wirephoto]

South Vietnamese youths, interrupting wild rioting, move toward sanctuary in Buddhist institute in Saigon with one of their injured mob members.

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PTTĐICH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958.*

- PTTĐICH 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958.*
- PTTĐICH 20186, *Tài Liệu của UB Lãnh Đạo Học tập TƯ v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị các tài liệu số 1/59, 2/59, 5/59, 6/59 năm 1959.*
- PTTĐICH 20187, *Tài Liệu của Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập TW, Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v Học Tập Chính Trị Bản Tuyên Cáo và cuốn “Bạch Thư” của Chính Phủ VNCH năm 1958.*
- PTTĐICH 20188, *Tài Liệu của VP Đông Lý v/v học tập chính trị “Tinh Thần và Giá Trị Hiến Pháp VNCH” năm 1959.*
- PTTĐICH 20192, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập PTT v/v hướng dẫn học tập chính trị “Đối Phó với công tác tuyên truyền giáo dục, hướng dẫn nhân dân đấu tranh của Việt Cộng” năm 1959.*
- PTTĐICH 20353, *Tài Liệu v/v Học Tập Chính Trị “Chủ Nghĩa Duy Linh” Năm 1960.*
- PTTĐICH 20354, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học tập Phủ Tổng Thống, Liên Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia hướng dẫn học tập chống cộng năm 1960.*
- PTTĐICH 20357, *Tài Liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v hướng dân học tập ‘đường lối chính trị, đường lối cách mạng xã hội của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa’ năm 1960.*
- PTTĐICH 20358, *Tài liệu của ban hướng dẫn học tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v “Nhận xét về âm mưu sửa đổi hiến pháp của Việt Cộng” nam 1960,*
- PTTĐICH 20359, *Tài Liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Phủ Tổng Thống v/v tìm hiểu chất “Mặt Trận Giải Phóng Miền Nam” năm 1960.*
- PTTĐICH 20530, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị của các đơn vị trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 5-6.1961*
- PTTĐICH 20531, *Biên Bản học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị học tập trực thuộc Nha Tổng Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 7, 8.1961.*
- PTTĐICH 20532, *Biên Bản các buổi học tập chính trị và tổ cộng của các đơn vị trực thuộc Tổng Nha Giám Đốc CSCA trong tháng 11 và 12. 1961.*
- PTTĐICH 20684, *Hồ sơ v/v tổ chức học tập chính trị cho nhân viên PTT 1962.*
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- PTTĐICH 7752, *tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của bộ Thông tin năm 1971*
- PTTĐICH 7757: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của bộ thông tin năm 1972-1973*
- Phủ Thủ Tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa [PTTVNCH] 14734, *Về Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng năm 1955.*

- PTTVNCH 18110, *Tập tài liệu của PThT, các Bộ, tỉnh v/v học tập Hiệp Định ngừng bắn năm 1972-1973*
- PTTVNCH 29164, *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955*
- PTTVNCH 29188, *Tài Liệu Của Thủ Thủ Tướng, Bộ Cải Cách v/v phát triển môn "Công Dân Giáo Dục" năm 1954-1955*
- PTTVNCH 29257, *Về tổ chức và hoạt động của phong trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia, Phong Trào Phụng Sự tiến hóa xã hội VN năm 1954-1963.*
- PTTVNCH 29293, *Tập tài liệu của Nha Kế Hoạch Bộ Thông Tin về kế hoạch học tập trong giới công chức và nhân dân năm 1963-1964.*
- PTTVNCH 29361, *Về Hoạt Động của Cán Lao Nhân Vị Cách Mạng Đảng (Đảng Cán Lao Việt Nam) năm 1953-1964.*
- PTTVNCH 29400, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm "ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1965.*
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- PTTVNCH 29577, *Tập tài liệu của Bộ Thông tin Chiêu Hồi về hoạt động thông tin tuyên truyền năm 1966.*
- PTTVNCH 29589, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966.*
- PTTVNCH 29589, *Hồ sơ tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, học tập trong các cơ quan đoàn thể năm 1965-1966.*
- PTTVNCH 29689, *Hoạt Động của khối công giáo năm 1966.*
- PTTVNCH 29697, *Hoạt Động của Chi Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia PHủ Thủ Tướng năm 1963-1966.*
- PTTVNCH 29720, *Tổ chức lễ kỷ niệm "Ngày Quốc Hận" 20.7.1967*
- PTTVNCH 29737, *Báo cáo học tập tại Nha Quảng Trị Nhân viên về đường lối xây dựng nông thôn trong năm 1967*
- PTTVNCH 29738, *Tài liệu của Ủy Ban Hành Pháp TW v/v tổ chức các cuộc hội thảo năm 1967.*
- PTTVNCH 29867, *Về hoạt động của khối công giáo năm 1967.*
- PTTVNCH 29916, *Tổ chức học tập thông điệp của Tổng Thống VNCH năm 1968.*

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- PTTVNCH 29918, *Tổ chức các buổi học tập, hội thảo về quân dịch, hòa bình, than nhũng, tổ chức chính quyền cộng sản, hiện tình vnch năm 1968*
- PTTVNCH 30270, *Tài liệu của PThT, Bộ Quốc Phòng v/v thành lập Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Hướng Dẫn học tập tại Trung Ương và các Tỉnh năm 1969.*
- PTTVNCH 30271, *Báo cáo của các Phủ, Bộ, Tỉnh v/v học tập chính trị năm 1969.*
- PTTVNCH 30272, *Báo cáo tổ chức và sinh hoạt tập thể của các phòng, sở thuộc võ phòng phủ thủ tướng năm 1968-1969,*
- PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969*
- PTTVNCH 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969.*
- PTTVNCH 30444, *Báo cáo học tập hàng tháng của các Nha, Sở thuộc PThT năm 1970*
- PTTVNCH 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970.*
- PTTVNCH 30450, *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về đẩy mạnh bình định yểm trợ tiền tuyến tự phòng có hậu phương bền vững tự túc tự quản và tự chế năm 1970*
- PTTVNCH 30670, *Tổ chức các buổi học tập thông tin đại chúng tại Phủ Thủ Tướng năm 1970-1971.*
- PTTVNCH 30917: *Tài liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về thông điệp và các bài nói chuyện của Tổng Thống năm 1972*
- PTTVNCH 30921, *Tài Liệu học tập của Bộ Thông Tin hướng dẫn học tập về kế hoạch cộng đồng tự vệ và cộng đồng phát triển địa phương năm 1971-1972,*
- PTTVNCH 30922: *Tài liệu hướng dẫn học tập của Bộ Thông Tin về hậu phương yểm trợ tiền tuyến hiện tình đất nước, chiến tranh, hòa bình và ngừng bắn năm 1972*
- PTTVNCH 31120: *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin hướng dẫn học tập về thông điệp của Tổng Thống, giải đáp thắc mắc hòa bình và ngừng bắn, sự thất bại của công an, thể thống của chúng ta và thực thi kế hoạch tết đơn vị năm 1973*
- PTTVNCH 31331, *Tài liệu học tập v/v thực thi chính sách tiết kiệm, đẩy mạnh sản xuất, tận diệt tham nhũng, củng cố chế độ năm 1971-1974*
- PTTVNCH 3134, *Tập bản tin VTX về lễ Quốc khánh ngày 01.11.1964.*
- PTTVNCH 31568, *Tổ chức học tập, chống thoát li theo cộng sản toàn dân tranh đấu cho hòa bình, tố cáo cộng sản vi phạm hiệp định Ba Lê năm 1973-1975.*
- PTTVNCH 32132A, *Tài Liệu của Hội Đồng Quân Nhân Cách Mạng, Thủ Tướng Phủ v/v giải tán đảng cần lao nhân vị, phong trào cách mạng quốc gia, phong trào liên đới phụ nữ năm 1963-1964.*

- Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Tị Nạn [PTTVNCH] 32656, *Về Phong Trào Học tập năm 1966-1975.*
- PTUDCTN 52, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957, Tập 1: Tổ Cộng năm 1955.*
- PTUDCTN 55, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 4: Tổng Kết Kế Hoạch động giai đoạn 1 và đệ nhất chu niên chiến dịch năm 1956.*
- PTUDCTN 53, *Về Chiến Dịch tổ Cộng Năm 1955-1957: Tập 2: Tài Liệu của PTTh, các Bộ, Hội đồng nhân dân chỉ đạo chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1956.*
- Tòa Đại Biểu Chính Phủ Nam Phần [TĐBCHNP] F6-57/2425, *Hồ Sơ về việc tuyên dương công trạng và tổ chức các buổi học tập chính trị của Ban Chỉ Đạo CDTC năm 1956.*
- TĐBCPNP 1125, *Công văn trao đổi giữa tòa đại biểu CP tại Nam Việt với Bộ Công Chánh sở du lịch, bộ điền thổ và cả cách điền địa, bộ thông tin và thanh niên, bộ tư pháp, bộ quốc phòng năm 1955.*
- TĐBCPNP 2744, *Về Ủy ban Tác Động Phong Trào Công Dân Giáo Dục Toàn Quốc Năm 1956*
- TĐBCPNP F6-113/2416, *Tài liệu học tập chính trị năm 1955.*
- Tổng Nha Quan Thuế Việt Nam [TNQTVN] 2488, *tập lưu công văn của ban chỉ đạo tổ cộng, ban hướng dẫn học tập năm 1957-1958.*
- Tổng Quan Thuế [TQT] 3463, *Hồ Sơ v/v học tập các đề tài năm 1963.*
- TQT 3585, *Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế v/v học tập đề tài "Ngày Quốc Hận", "Cách mạng 01/11/1963" năm 1964.*
- TQT 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965.*
- TQT 3727, *Tập bản tin về học tập của ủy ban lãnh Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng Trung Ương, Các Bộ, Phòng Thông Tin Hoa Kỳ năm 1955-1965*
- TQT 4122, *Tài liệu của Bộ Tài Chánh, Ủy Ban chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng, Tổng Nha Quan Thuế, các nha, sở trao đổi về học tập và các hoạt động khác năm 1955-1967*

APPENDIX

### *Foreword*

This appendix will reproduce a number of documents drawn from what I have collected from the depositories at Vietnam National Archive II in Hồ Chí Minh City. These documents are selected based on their importance to the development of this dissertation. They, furthermore, will be empirically valuable for those interested in verifying the main claims of the dissertation regarding the Political Study Program and ideological education during the Republican era. These documents will be reproduced in their original Vietnamese-language. Some will be scanned reproduction of the actual documents drawn from the archives, while others will be transcription of those documents where photographic reproduction was not available. The first set will primarily organizational materials outlining the operations and activities of the PSP across Republican history. The second set will be selected ideological materials taught in PSP sessions. In the order of their reproduction below, these documents are as follow.

The first is the originally directive from the Minister of Information, Trần Chánh Thành, dictating the five original topics of study inaugurating the Political Study Program. Dated the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, 1955, the document also directed governmental organs to develop “study committees” and immediately engage in political study.

The second is a speech delivered in December 1955 as part of the Communist Denunciation Campaign which outlines the scope of activities, organization, and structure of political study during this early period of the Republic.

The third is a transcription of the 1958 operational guidelines for the PSP. Formalized in August, the early draft devised in July is attached to the document. Included as well is Memo 105-TTP/VP dated August 18, 1958 in which Ngô Đình Diệm direct governmental organs to enact these guidelines. This document is useful for understanding the organizational structure of PSP operations as devised under the First Republic.

The fourth is a transcription of the original directive outlining the organizational operations of the “Discussion Movement” under Nguyễn Cao Kỳ. Structure, goals, and operations of the Discussion Movement mirrors that of Political Study under the First Republic.

The fifth is the digital reproduction of political study guidelines as they existed in 1969 under the “Campaign for Nationwide Political Study.” Subsequently, the sixth is the digital reproduction of guidelines for the “General Information Program,” and the seventh is the executive order by Premier Trần Thiện Khiêm establishing the Program.

The next set of documents are ideological materials taught in PSP sessions. The first three are part of the original materials sent out by Trần Chánh Thành in August 1955. Document 8 is entitled “The Evil Sins of the Communists” *Những Tội Ác Của Việt Cộng*, and Document 9 is a brief piece detailing the “origins and consequences” of the 1954 Geneva signings. Document 10 is the original study material on what this dissertation had called “Anti-Neutrality.” The piece, entitled “Making Thoughts Resolute” *Đứt Khoát Tư Tưởng* explicates the political rationale behind being “resolute” against communist propaganda, sympathies, and influences. Document 11 is a 1960 study material entitled “Why Oppose Communism” *Tại Sao Chống Cộng*. Document 12 is a 1960 philosophical study material on the Personalist perspective of “Spiritualism” *Duy Linh* and its contrasts to “materialism” and “idealism.” And finally Document 13 is a 1970 study material under the General Information Program entitled “Where



We Stand in the Present Moment” *Thế Đứng Của Chúng Ta Trong Giai Đoạn Hiện Tại*. This piece is a recalibration of the Republican Anti-Neutralist narrative to speak to challenges and issues facing the Second Republic.

## DOCUMENT 1

Source: Phủ Thủ Tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 29164, Tài liệu của Bộ Thông Tin v/v tổ chức các khóa học tập chính trị năm 1955

01

QUỐC-GIA VIỆT-NAM  
 -:-:-:-  
 BỘ THÔNG-TIN  
 -o--o--  
 SỐ 1578 /BTT/VP  
 K H N

Saigon, ngày 13 tháng 8 năm 1955

TỔNG-TRƯỞNG BỘ THÔNG-TIN  
 VÀ CHIẾN-TRANH TÂM-LÝ

Kính gửi  
 .....  
 .....

- S A I G O N -

Tiếp theo công-văn số 1468/BTT/VP về việc các quý Bộ, Nha, Sở gửi người đến dự Hội-nghị nghiên-cứu học-tập chính-trị khóa I.

Bộ tôi kính báo để quý Bộ, Nha, Sở hay Hội-nghị đó đi khai-mạc hôm 8/8 và đi bế-mạc hồi 6 giờ chiều hôm 11/8/1955.


Trong thời-gian 4 ngày qua, các công-chức được quý Bộ, Nha, Sở gửi đi dự khóa chính-trị thứ nhất để tham-khảo và học-tập những tài-liệu sau đây :

- 1o)- Dứt-khớt tu-tướng,
- 2o)- Tội ác Việt-Cộng,
- 3o)- Phòng-gian bảo-mật,
- 4o)- Quan-hệ bình-thường và Tổng Tuyên-Cử 56,
- 5o)- Huân-thi của NGÔ THỦ-TƯỚNG cho các công-chức ngày 8/8/55. (5 tài-liệu đính kèm).

Để việc phát-tộng phong-trào học-tập ở các cơ-quan được bành-trướng và thu-lượm được nhiều kết-quả tốt-dẹp theo đúng đường-lối của NGÔ THỦ-TƯỚNG đi huân-thi cho các công-chức ngày 8/8/55, Bộ tôi trân-trọng yêu-cầu quý Bộ, Tòa, Phủ, chỉ-thị cho các Nha, Sở hết sức giúp-dỡ những nhân-viên đi dự lớp học trên để có thể thành-lập các Ban học-tập tại các cơ-quan theo những tài-liệu đã nói trên (mỗi tuần 2 hay 3 buổi tổ-chức nghiên-cứu học-tập ở các cơ-quan).

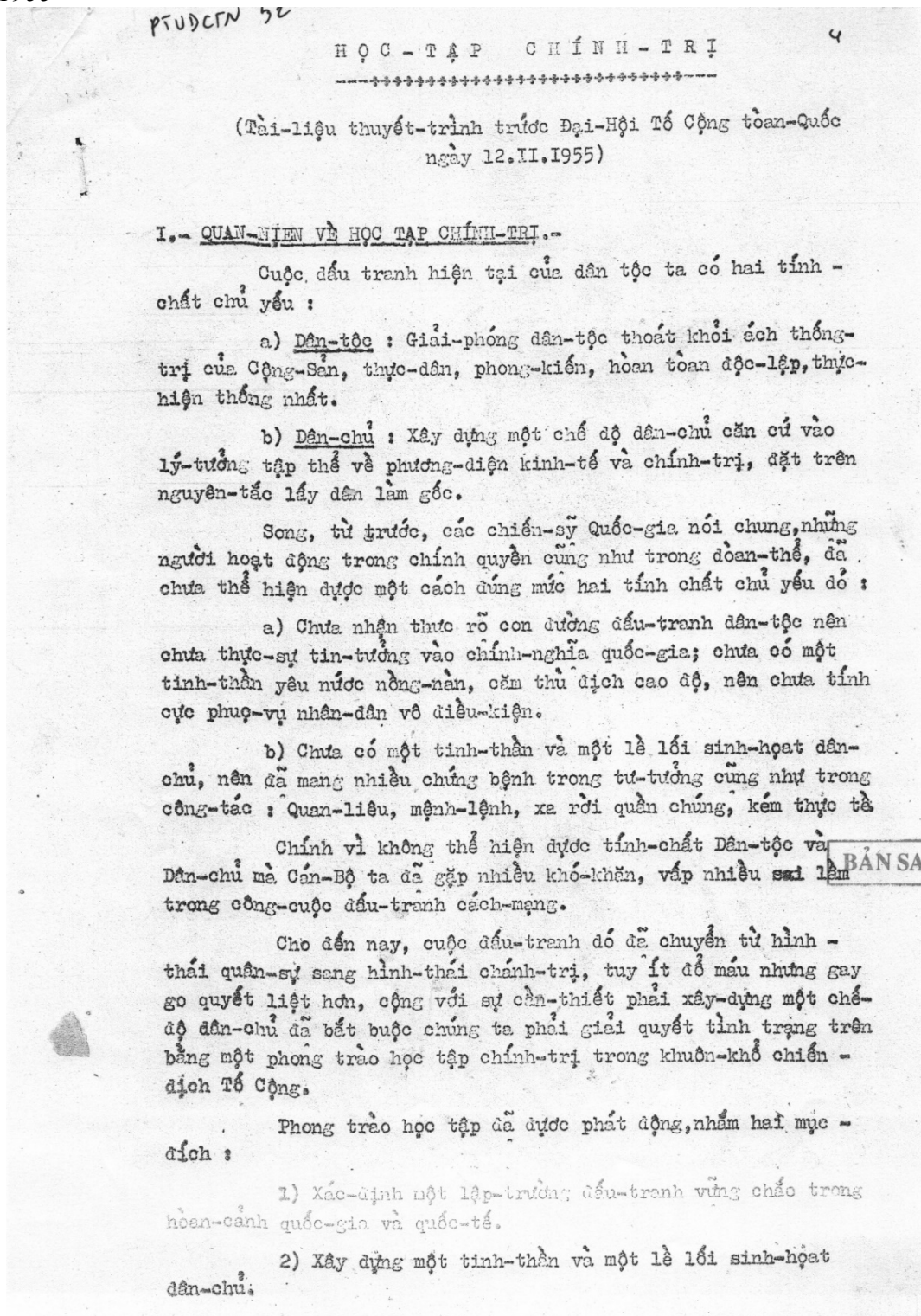
Bộ tôi mong-mỏi ở sự giúp-dỡ của quý Bộ, Phủ, Tòa để cho phong-trào học-tập chính-trị tại các cơ-quan ngày một tiên-bộ song song với chiến-dịch "Tổ-Cộng".

Kính chào triệt-dứt tham-gia chiến-dịch "Tổ-Cộng"../.

  
 T. H. N.

## DOCUMENT 2

Source: Phủ Tổng Ủy Di Cư Ty Nạn 52, Về chiến dịch tổ cộng năm 1955-1957 Tập 1: Tổ cộng năm 1955



Muốn đạt hai mục-dịch nói trên, phong trào học-tập chính-trị phải có tác-dụng :

- Trao đổi nhận-thực, mở rộng kiến-thức.
- Thẩm-nhuần sâu-sắc chủ-trương đường lối của Chính-Phủ.
- Nêu cao tinh-thần yêu nước và lòng căm thù địch.
- Phát huy mọi khả năng chính-trị và chuyên-môn.
- Cải tạo tư-tưởng, sửa đổi lề-lối làm việc.

Tuy vậy, chúng ta sẽ không thể nào đạt được hai mục-dịch đó, nếu không có một thái độ học tập đúng-dắn.

Quan-niệm học-tập chính-trị một cách đúng-dắn như thế, Hội-dồng chỉ-đạo chiến-dịch Tổ Cộng Trung-ương đã đặt vấn đề đó vào đúng tâm quan-trọng của nó.

Sau hai đợt của chiến-dịch Tổ Cộng, nhờ những chủ-trương đúng-dắn, kế hoạch cụ thể, nhờ tinh thần tự-nguyện tư-giác của toàn thể cán-bộ và viên-chức, phong-trào học-tập chính-trị đã tiến một bước vững chắc, và đã mang đến những kết quả tốt đẹp.

## II.- NHỮNG THIẾU SÓT VẤP PHẢI.-

Tuy nhiên, kiểm điểm lại công-tác học-tập chính-trị của chúng ta qua hai đợt Tổ Cộng, chúng ta phải thừa-nhận rằng, song song với những ưu điểm đáng chú ý, còn có nhiều khuyết điểm :

### a) TỔ-CHỨC.-

- 1) Tổ-chức các lớp học đông quá, không đủ chỗ ngồi, không giữ được trật-tự để cho việc hướng dẫn và kiểm-sát gặp-nhiều khó khăn.
- 2) Thi hành chỉ thị trên một cách máy móc cứng nhắc. Vào các chiều thứ hai, thứ sáu mà không biết linh-dộng đổi sang một ngày khác cho hợp với hoàn cảnh hơn. Thành-thủ trong những buổi học, nhiều nhân-viên bận công-tác chuyên-môn phải vắng mặt không được tham-dự học tập.
- 3) Các tài liệu không được chuẩn bị đầy đủ và thích hợp với mức yêu cầu một lớp học. Ban phụ-trách học tập không phân-phối trước đây đủ tài liệu cho học viên nghiên-cứu, nên khi lên lớp, sinh ra lúng túng, không nắm vững vấn-đề, không có ý kiến. Hay nếu có, thì tài liệu đưa ra lại cao quá chi-tiết quá nên thảo luận kéo dài thì giờ để cho nhiều học viên chán nản và không thẩm-nhuần được tài liệu.
- 4) Một số khác không chú trọng đến sự tổ-chức phòng học tuy hình-thức này có rất nhiều ảnh hưởng đến tinh-thần và kết-

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gũa học tập. Phòng học chật chội, không trang hoàng, thiếu ghế ngồi, không sắp xếp thứ-tự. Do đó Ban Chấp-Hành Hội-Nghị không kiểm sát chung được, học viên chen lấn nhau, không tập trung được tư-tưởng.

b) HƯỚNG-DẪN: Về phương pháp này, phần đông mỗi cơ-quan áp-dụng một chính-sách riêng, và vì thế, đường lối không thông-nhất, kết quả thu lượm được rất kém cỏi:

1) Không nêu được trọng tâm và yêu-cầu bài học: Bài học dài, thì gớ ít, trình độ học viên chênh-lệch. Do đó trọng-tâm và yêu cầu của từng bài học không được nêu lên. Những phần đáng thảo-luận kỹ thì không thảo luận, phần nên thông qua thì lại nêu nhiều thắc mắc. Kết quả thu được không cụ thể.

2) Không thống nhất phương-pháp hướng dẫn: Thuyết-trình viên làm việc một đường, Chủ-tọa điều khiển một lối. Nhiều khi ý kiến chủ-tọa và thuyết-trình viên mâu-thuẫn lẫn nhau, đối chọi nhau làm mất thì giờ và để học viên hoang mang.

### III.- PHƯƠNG-PHÁP KIẾN TOÁN TỔ-CHỨC HỌC-TẬP:-

Với khẩu hiệu "Tất cả cho chiến-dịch Tổ Cộng", với chủ-trương, chuyển mạnh toàn bộ khả năng của mọi ngành mọi mặt giốc vào công cuộc Tổ Cộng, công tác học tập chính-thị phải được coi là trọng-tâm công-tác soi đường cho chiến-dịch.

Muốn thực hiện chủ-trương đó, chúng ta cần phải:

- Kiến toán tổ-chức học-tập.
- Thống nhất phương-pháp hướng dẫn và lề lối làm việc.
- Học tập kinh-nghiệm.

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#### 1°) HÌNH-THỨC TỔ-CHỨC.

a) Chia tổ: Số lượng các lớp rất cần cho phương pháp hướng-dẫn và ảnh hưởng trực-tiếp đến kết quả của các cuộc thảo-luận. Do đó, cần phải chia ra nhiều lớp, nếu cơ-quan nào đã có trên 100 người. Mỗi lớp lại nên chia ra nhiều tổ theo đơn vị công-tác để thuận tiện cho việc tập hợp trong các buổi học tập và dễ dàng cho việc điều khiển. Mỗi tổ lại có thể chia ra làm nhiều tiểu tổ, tùy theo hoàn cảnh của từng cơ-quan vì, tổ chức tiểu tổ sẽ giúp cho ta theo dõi sát việc thực hiện công-tác của các học-viên, làm dễ dàng cho các học-viên mạnh dạn phát biểu ý-kiến của mình và cũng để thuận tiện cho cá-nhân nghiên-cứu, mẫn đàm thích hợp với hoàn cảnh.

b) Phòng học: Phòng học tuy nhỏ, là một hình thức bề ngoài, song cũng cần được chú trọng đến. Nếu phòng học chật hẹp ghế ngồi thiếu thốn, các học-viên phải đứng chen

còn để cho học-viên coi thường nhiệm vụ học tập.

Bởi thế, phòng học không những cần phải rộng rãi, riêng biệt, đủ ghế ngồi, mà còn cần được trang hoàng tối thiểu Q uốc kỳ, ảnh NGÔ TÔNG-THÔNG và những khẩu hiệu có ý-nghĩa động viên trực tiếp đến tinh thần của học viên.

c) Thời gian : Việc ấn-dịnh thời gian các lớp cần phải thực hiện cho thích hợp với hoàn cảnh của từng nơi, miễn là mỗi tuần lễ, chúng ta có thể tổ chức học tập được hai lần cho mỗi đơn vị và hàng tháng một lần tiếng vào một ngày khác cho toàn bộ cơ-quan để tổng kết và kiểm thảo, rút ưu-khuyết điểm, đúc kết kinh nghiệm, bổ khuyết cho lần sau.

d) Tài liệu : Tài liệu là gia vị căn bản của các kỳ học tập.

Có hai tài liệu :

- Tài liệu chính để thuyết trình, thảo luận.
- Tài liệu phụ để tham khảo và đọc thêm.

Tài liệu phụ như văn thơ, báo chí, chuyện, phim ảnh cần phải có nội dung sát với tài liệu chính để mở rộng ý-nghĩa cho tài liệu chính.

Tài liệu chính và tài liệu phụ phải kết hợp chặt-chẽ với nhau để làm cho bài học chính đạt được mục đích và yêu cầu đã nêu lên.

Từ trước việc cung cấp tài liệu không được đều đặn, đã làm cho các cấp bộ không đầy mạnh được phong trào. Do đó, việc xây dựng và cung cấp tài liệu học tập cho toàn quốc trong đợt 3 đã chính thức do TRUNG-ƯƠNG đảm nhiệm và các cơ sở các địa-phương chỉ có nhiệm vụ khai thác và hướng dẫn các tài liệu đó.

## 2°) NHIỆM-VỤ và PHƯƠNG-PHÁP LÀM VIỆC CỦA BAN HƯỚNG DẪN và HỌC-VIÊN.

a) Chủ tọa : Chủ tọa giữ một phần trách nhiệm nặng nề trong mỗi buổi học. Nhiệm vụ chủ tọa là giữ gìn trật tự hội nghị, khéo gợi thắc mắc và ý-kiến học-viên, chủ trì thái độ học tập của hội nghị, hướng Hội-ngị vào trọng tâm bài học, tóm tắt một cách đúng và gọn gàng những ý-kiến của học-viên và thuyết-trình-viên.

Chủ tọa, trong một cuộc hội nghị học tập phải nắm vững được số người hiện diện, số người vắng mặt, số người ra vào, số người muốn phát biểu ý-kiến. Phần việc này, tuy hoàn cảnh, chủ tọa có thể ủy-nhiệm cho một người phụ tá của

Có nhiều vấn đề, khi được nêu ra, tuy mọi người đã thông, không không thể đưa ra được những ý-kiến và thắc-mắc. Trước sự bế tắc đó, chủ tọa phải gợi ý cho học viên, để học viên nhân đó mà suy nghĩ và phát biểu.

Trước mỗi buổi học, cũng cần nhắc lại những thái độ học tập cần có, và, suốt cả buổi học, chủ tọa phải chú-trì được những thái độ đó. Nếu có một học viên kèm phát biểu ý-kiến không đúng, bị mọi người xì xạo, chủ tọa phải chỉnh đốn ngay lại thái độ đó, nhắc mọi người phải tôn-trọng ý-kiến của người khác. Nếu có một học viên hiểu thẳng cứ bo bo bảo thủ ý-kiến chủ-quan của mình, chủ-tọa phải ngắt lời và dịu dặt cho đó tôn-trọng tinh-thần phục-thiện.

Trong khi thảo-luận gặp những vấn-đề được có nhiều ý-kiến sôi-nổi, nhưng không vì thế mà để đi ra quá trọng-tâm bài học, chủ-tọa phải ngắt những ý-kiến ngoài đề và hướng-hội-nghị vào bài học. Muốn vậy, điều cần thiết là chủ-tọa phải nắm vững được trọng-tâm bài học và hoàn toàn thông-nhất với thuyết-trình-viên trên mọi quan điểm về bài học bằng một cuộc hội ý trước.

Sau khi thuyết trình-viên trình bày tài-liệu và học viên thảo luận, chủ-tọa phải tóm tắt những ý kiến đó cho thật gọn, và đầy đủ để thư ký có thể ghi chép được rõ ràng.

Chủ-tọa cũng là người điều khiển hoạt động của tổ Văn-Nghệ để động viên hội-nghị hay làm giải những phút - căng thẳng của hội-trưởng khi thấy mọi người mệt mỏi hay gặp những ý-kiến sung đột khác khe.

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b) Thuyết-trình-viên : Thuyết-trình-viên là người trình bày, giới thiệu tài liệu học tập với học-viên. Đó là công-việc rất quan trọng. Nếu trình bày và giới thiệu sai lầm có thể gây rất nhiều tai hại và phản lại cả nội dung bài học. Nhiệm vụ của thuyết-trình-viên là làm cho mọi học-viên hiểu đúng đắn, nhớ dễ dàng những tài liệu học tập. Muốn làm trọn nhiệm vụ đó, thuyết-trình-viên cần làm việc có phương pháp và kinh-nghiệm.

Thuyết-trình-viên phải phụ-trách công tác thuyết-trình cho suốt cả một đợt học-tập, bất đắc dĩ, phải vắng mặt mới nên tìm người thay.

Thuyết-trình có ba phần-chính :

- Nêu mục đích và yêu cầu bài học.
- Tóm tắt nội dung bài học.

Phân-tách những chi-tiết quan-trọng để cho học

viên nắm vững tài liệu mà thảo-luận.

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Trong những trường-hợp mà học-viên không đồng ý với tài-liệu ở một điểm nào đó, thuyết-trình-viên sẽ cùng với chủ tọa và ban lãnh-đạo học tập trao đổi ý-kiến tìm cách giải-quyết. Những ý-kiến nào không giải quyết được phải báo-cáo ngay với cấp chỉ-huy trực tiếp của đơn vị.

- c) Học-viên: Học-viên phải thấm-nhuần tài-liệu, đồng thời phải góp ý-kiến xây dựng, bồi bổ, phát-triển tài-liệu. Cuộc học tậpчанh-trị sẽ coi như là không có kết-qua, nếu học-viên không làm tròn nhiệm-vụ đó.

Muốn thế, học-viên cần phải có thái-độ học tập và phương-pháp làm việc đúng đắn.

#### T thái-độ học tập :

Thái-độ quan-trọng nhất là nghiêm chỉnh và tập-trung tư-tưởng, đào sâu suy ky. Nghiêm chỉnh là không coi việc học tập chính-trị là một trò chơi giải trí, mà trái lại phải xem đó như là một nhiệm-vụ quan-trọng và khẩn thiết của những chiến-sỹ quốc-gia lúc này. Bởi thế, trong lúc học, phải tập trung tư-tưởng, không được nghĩ ngợi ở đâu đâu. Đối với mỗi vấn đề nêu ra phải suy luận ky-lưỡng, phải tìm hiểu chu-đáo vấn-đề, phải tìm ra thắc mắc, phải tuyệt đối tránh lối làm : cho xong chuyện.

Thái-độ thứ hai là mạnh-dạn phát biểu ý-kiến, nhưng sẵn sàng phục-thiện. Mỗi vấn-đề nêu lên, nếu mọi người đều coi nhẹ và ào-ạt thông qua, vấn-đề đó sẽ không thể nào sáng rõ được mà trái lại, vấn-đề đó chỉ sáng rõ khi nào được mọi người góp ý-kiến thảo-luận sôi nổi. Vậy, trong lớp học, mọi học viên phải mạnh dạn phát-biểu ý-kiến, đừng dụt dè cho rằng ý-kiến mình không đúng hay sợ bị ban Lãnh-đạo dè y vì những ý-kiến của mình đi ngược chiều với tài-liệu. Khi nào chưa thông suốt được tài-liệu, thì cứ mạnh dạn phát-biểu, nhưng khi vấn-đề đã sáng tỏ mọi người đồng ý thì phải phục-thiện, bao thu ý-kiến làm mất thì giờ của cả lớp học.

Thái độ thứ ba là tôn-trọng ý-kiến của mỗi người : mỗi ý-kiến đều đúng đều sai, khi đã phát biểu ra phải được coi là một ý-kiến trong hội-nghị cần được khai thác, có người khi nghe những học-viên phát-biểu ý-kiến có vẻ lung-cung, mơ hồ, đã vội x i xạo làm cho người đó không dám nói hết lợi và những người sau trở nên dụt dè sợ hãi. Thái-độ đó ngăn cản sự tự-do tư-tưởng và ảnh-hưởng tai-hại đến tinh-thần xây dựng chung.

#### Phương-pháp học-tập :

Trước khi lên lớp, học-viên đã nhận được tài-liệu học-tập. Học-viên phải đọc kỹ tài-liệu đó. Những chỗ nào chưa hiểu chỗ nào không đồng ý, nên đánh dấu lên cạnh và mang ra thảo-luận với bè bạn xung quanh. Sau đó, học-viên, nên đặt mình vào địa-vị phe đối lập để xét lại ý-kiến trong tài-liệu, đưa ra những lý-luận trái ngược. Những lý-luận này, khi tự mình không đã phá nổi, nên ghi lên trên một tờ giấy để đưa ra thảo-luận trước hội-nghị học tập. Bất kỳ một lý-luận nào, no chỉ có giá-trị khi được chứng minh trong thực tế. Bởi vậy, học-viên luôn luôn phải tìm trong thực tế xa hội, đơn vị mình, cơ-quan mình,

BẢN SAO

...../7.



bản thân mình những dẫn chứng cụ thể để chứng minh những lý luận mình nghiên cứu.

### III - HỌC TẬP KINH-NGHIỆM: -

Kinh-nghiệm là tất cả những ưu khuyết điểm của các tổ chức các địa-phương đúc kết lại, sau khi thực-hiện một chu-trương công-tác đã đề ra.

Kinh-nghiệm không phải chỉ là những thắng-lợi hay kết quả của công-tác thực-hiện đó - mà là tất cả những thành-công và thất-bại đã thu lượm được.

Bởi thế, muốn có kinh-nghiệm, các cơ-quan chỉ-đạo cần phải theo dõi những hoạt-động của các cơ sở trực thuộc kiểm điểm những thành-tích công-tác đã làm, bằng cách hướng dẫn các cơ sở áp-dụng phương-pháp kiểm thảo, phê bình tự phê-bình và báo-cáo.

Khi nắm vững những mục-tiêu then chốt đó, cơ-quan chỉ-đạo sẽ phê bình chung cho toàn bộ để phát-huy những sang-kiến ưu-điểm và sửa-chữa những khuyết-điểm, lỗi lầm đã mắc phải:

- Kiểm thảo : Kiểm thảo là công-tác đòi hỏi đầu tiên ở các học-viên một thiện-chí xây dựng và tinh-thần thanh-khản cần tiến-bộ.

Kiểm-thảo sẽ nằm trong hình-thức phê-bình và tự phê-bình để đối chiếu tư-tưởng, lý-luận với thực-tế công-tác.

Muốn thế, sau các buổi học tập, học-viên cần phải nhận thực những sự sai, biệt của mình để tự phê phán, sửa-chữa và phát huy những khả-năng tiến-bộ của mình để giúp đỡ cho mình và bè bạn mình mỗi ngày một tiến bộ thêm.

Tuy nhiên, công-tác kiểm thảo, cần phải được thực-hiện trên tinh-thần rất khách-quan, không thiên-vị nhìn vào thực-tế việc làm mà không soi mói, chằm biếm từng người để làm mất hoa khí đoàn kết.

Công-tác kiểm-thảo có thể tổ-chức tại hội trường, tại tổ hay tiểu tổ và còn có tổ-chức riêng cho từng cá-nhân.

Tiêu-chuẩn kiểm-thảo phải nhằm :

- Kết quả học tập
- Thái-độ học tập
- Tổ-chức học tập
- Phương-pháp học tập.

**BẢN SAO**

- Báo-cáo : Báo-cáo là công-tác không kém phần quan-trọng trong công-tác kiện-toàn tổ-ghực. Do đó, có rất nhiều các cơ sở đã không ý thức được rõ ràng công-tác cho đúng mục, nên có khi có rất nhiều thành-tích hoạt động đang kể đã không trình thuật được kết quả của sự việc của mình một cách căn cứ khoa học để Trung-ương không thấu suốt được những cố gắng và tận tụy của địa-phương mình. Ngược lại cũng có một số các

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nơi khác, thì vì chưa có tinh-thần tích-cực phục-vụ cho chiến-dịch, các cấp lãnh-đạo tắc trách, các cán-bộ lười biếng, đã không ngoan cố áp báo-cáo cho hay, đẹp, cho kêu, lời lẽ văn hoá mục-đích để che đậy những thiếu sót của mình và đánh lạc sự thực một cách vô ý-thức, đã làm tai hại lớn cho chủ-trương chung của toàn bộ.

Bởi thế, công-tác báo-cáo phải được coi là một trong những công-tác trọng-tâm của các cấp, đặc cơ sở các địa-phương phải tỏ rõ cho cấp trên mình biết mình là một bộ phận tại mặt của chiến-dịch, có nhiệm vụ chuyên-đạt những nguyện vọng của các đại phương cũng như trau dồi những kinh-nghiệm của cơ sở, mình lên Trung-ương để, nếu có những điểm sai lầm có thể sửa chữa, kịp thời và những sáng-kiến có thể phê-biến được cho các cơ sở đồng đội.

Muốn được đặt đúng vai trò đó, tác dụng của báo-cáo phải giữ một sự liên hệ, vô cùng mật-thiết giữa các cấp. Tính-chất và nội dung báo phải :

- đều đặn, đúng thời gian
- tỷ mỉ rõ ràng
- tránh lập-luận rườm rà, văn-hoá.
- tránh lối làm "lấy lệ" và dấu một  
những khuyết-diểm.

Nội dung báo-cáo phải chia làm 5 phần :

1) Tổ-chức học tập

- Chia tổ
- Phong học
- Kiểm tra đôn đốc
- Kết quả
- Kinh-nghiệm

2) Hướng dẫn học tập

- Động viên học tập
- Thuyết trình
- Chú-trì
- Thảo-luận
- Kiểm-thảo
- Kết-quả
- Kinh-nghiệm

BẢN SAO

3) Tinh-thần và thái-độ học tập

- Tinh-thần : tỷ số hăng hái, lòng-chúng íc tích cực
- Thái-độ ;
- Những cá-nhân, đơn vị khá, gương mẫu và tiến-bộ.

4) Kết quả

- Sự nhận thức tài-liệu
- Sự liên-hệ thực tế
- Kết quả thực-tế trong công-tác.

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5) Những sáng-kiến và kinh-nghiệm

Tùy theo hoàn-cảnh địa-phương mà thêm bớt những mục-tiêu trên đây trong bản báo-cáo mục-đích làm cho cấp trên nắm vững được tình hình và thu được kinh-nghiệm để nghiên-cứu và phổ-biến cho các địa-phương khác.

IV - KẾT - LUẬN -

Chúng ta đã cùng nhận xét tác-dụng sự ít-lợi của công-tác học tập chính-trị, chúng ta đã cùng kiểm-điểm những thiếu-sốt của phong trào trên những bước đường đã đi, chúng ta đã vạch ra một lối kiện-toan công-tác đó.

Trên tinh-thần dân-chủ, tôn-trọng quyền tập thể, tất cả một chính-sách chung cho thoan-thể chúng ta đã được trao đổi và đặt định trong một cuộc Đại-hội để cùng phát triển cho kỹ-thuật học tập thêm lành mạnh và tiến-bộ. Tinh-cách quan-trọng của Đại-hội đã đánh dấu một chặng đường vừa đi qua, kết thúc đợt I và II của giai đoạn I và sẽ mở màn cho đợt chót của giai đoạn phát-động mà trọng-tâm để phát khởi mặt trận tâm-lý toàn diện trừ cộng-san.

Để kết luận trên nguyên-tắc nhận thức đúng mức sự quan trọng của công-tác học tập, chúng ta sẽ lấy lời tuyên-bổ lịch-sử của Ngô Tổng-Thống dưới đây làm phương-châm cho công-tác học tập toàn bộ.

"Những bước đường đã đi qua trong hoàn-cảnh cực kỳ khó khăn bao đảm cho sự thành-công trên đoạn đường sắp đi tới".

"Chúng ta kiên quyết nhất tâm, nhất trí, đấu-tranh cho chính-nghĩa quốc gia. Thắng-lợi nhất định sẽ về ta"./.

BẢN SAO

Source: Phủ Tổng Thống Đệ I Cộng Hòa 20030, *Hồ Sơ v/v Tổ Chức Học Tập thời sự, công dân giáo dục, chuyên môn, văn hóa tại bộ kinh tế năm 1958.*

[BEGINNING OF DOCUMENT 3]

Số 86-BPTT

Saigon, ngày 5 tháng 7 năm 1958

Bộ Trưởng tại Phủ Tổng Thống Kính Gởi Quý Vị Bộ Trưởng

Trích Yếu: Học Tập.

Thưa Ông Bộ Trưởng,

Tôi trân trọng gởi theo đây đề quý Bộ nghiên cứu và chuẩn bị thi hành 1 tài liệu về cách tổ chức và chương trình học tập từ nay tới tháng 12/1958 tại các công sở.

Một Ban Trung Ương Hướng Dẫn học tập đã được thành lập với thành phần như sau:

- O. Bộ Trưởng tại Phủ Tổng Thống hay vị Đại diện.....Chủ Tịch
- O. Bộ Trưởng Nội Vụ hay vị Đại Diện.....)
- O. Bộ Trưởng Thông Tin hay vị Đại Diện.....)Ủy Viên
- O. Giám Đốc Nha Chiến Tranh Tâm Lý.....)
- Đại Diện Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia (O. Nguyễn Thiệu))

Ban này sẽ được triệu tập trong 1 ngày gần đây và có nhiệm vụ theo dõi, đôn đốc, kiểm tra công tác học tập cùng đề nghị lên Tổng Thống mọi thưởng phạt về vấn đề này.

Kính Thơ:

Nguyễn Đình Thuần

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Vấn Đề Học Tập

- A. Ý Nghĩa Học Tập
- B. Nội Dung và Mục Đích Học Tập
- C. Phương Pháp học Tập
- D. Chương Trình Học Tập Năm 1958 (Từ tháng 5 đến tháng 12)
- E. Kết Luận

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VẤN ĐỀ HỌC TẬP

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A. Ý NGHĨA

- Xây dựng lập trường, nâng cao dân trí cho mỗi công dân
- Tạo cho công chức một quan niệm phục vụ nhân dân đúng với nhiệm vụ mà Chánh Phủ giao phó
- Tạo cho các cán bộ đoàn thể một ý niệm phục vụ nhân dân trên quan điểm phục vụ Chính Nghĩa Quốc Gia.

B. NỘI DUNG VÀ MỤC ĐÍCH

Nội dung việc học tập gồm 2 phần: và mỗi phần gồm 2 mục chính:

PHẦN I—Học Tập Công Dân Giáo Dục và Thời Sự

1/ CÔNG DÂN GIÁO DỤC nhằm mục đích:

- Nâng cao dân trí, bồi dưỡng kiến thức cho mỗi công dân

- Xây dựng lập trường, đặt lại vấn đề trách nhiệm cho mỗi công chức và cán bộ đoàn thể,
- Nhân dân mọi tầng lớp đều thông suốt được đường lối, chủ trương và chính sách của Chính Phủ Cộng Hòa.

2/ THỜI SỰ nhắm mục đích theo dõi những biến chuyển của tình hình quốc hội và quốc ngoại.

- Nhận định được thời cuộc một cách minh xác-Hiểu rõ được chính sách của Chính Phủ Cộng Hòa.

#### PHẦN II-Học Tập Chuyên Môn và Văn Hóa

1/ CHUYỂN MÔN-Nâng cao kỹ thuật chuyên môn, phát huy sáng kiến, tăng hiện năng công tác.

2/ VĂN HÓA-Nâng cao trình độ kiến thức-Hướng dẫn tư tưởng con người kịp với và tiến hóa chung của nhân loại.

#### C. PHƯƠNG PHÁP

1/ Việc Học tập-> lấy đơn vị (trung bình 10 người) làm cơ sở căn bản.

2/ Mỗi cơ quan, đoàn thể nhiều nhân viên, đoàn viên (từ 100 người trở lên) đều có thể tổ chức thành một hội trường học tập.

- Tại Trung Ương, mỗi Bộ là một hội trường học tập
- Tại địa phương, mỗi tỉnh là một hội trường học tập

3/ Mỗi hội trường đều có 2 cấp học tập:

- Cấp I-Lớp Thuyết Trình Viên: Thành phần gồm có các cán bộ thuyết trình và cá chỉ huy và phụ tá cơ quan hay đoàn thể.

Vị Chỉ huy Trường cùng với Tiểu Ban Học Tập của cơ quan hay đoàn thể sở quan lãnh đạo việc học tập

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- Cấp II-Các lớp Học Tập tại các đơn vị: thành phần gồm có các nhân viên hay đoàn viên của mỗi cơ quan hay đoàn thể. Mỗi lớp học tập này không dưới 6 người và không quá 10 người.

Các học viên lớp thuyết trình viên được phân công đến hướng dẫn học tập tại các đơn vị

4/ Việc học tập của các lớp Học Tập cấp I và II

Các lớp học tập cấp I và cấp II mỗi tuần đều học tập 2 lần, mỗi lần khoảng độ 1 giờ.

5/Hội Trường Học Tập

Mỗi khi tại các đơn vị của 1 hội trường đã học tập xong hẳn một tài liệu, ban hướng dẫn học tập sẽ tổ chức 1 buổi học tập tại Hội Trường. Buổi học tập sẽ chung cho lớp Thuyết Trình Viên và các lớp học tập tại các đơn vị. Ban học tập tổng kết tài liệu.

6/ Phương Pháp

- Ban Học Tập chuyển đạt tài liệu
- Cá nhân nghiên cứu-đề ra các thắc mắc (phát triển chủ quan để đưa ra đơn vị thảo luận và việc chính yếu)

- Đơn vị thảo luận và sơ kết—dưa những thắc mắc chính đáng ra Hội Trường
- Hội trường tổng kết tài liệu, xếp loại về kiến thức, về lập trường tư tưởng, về các thắc mắc của các đơn vị.

#### 7/ Thành Lập ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập

Mỗi hội trường đều phải thành lập một ban hướng dẫn học tập

Nhiệm vụ của ban này:

- a. Tìm đề tài học tập:
  - Do cấp trên gửi đến
  - Tự lựa đề tài học tập cho thích hợp với mức yêu cầu của ngành mình hay địa phương mình.
- b. Soạn thảo "tài liệu hướng dẫn" để phụ lục cho tài liệu học tập chính.
 

"Tài liệu hướng dẫn" phải nhắm chiêu tuần:

  - Nhận định về mục đích tài liệu
  - Phân tích các đoạn chính
  - Giải thích các danh từ khó
  - Sau mỗi phần, mỗi đoạn câu tài liệu, phải đặt sẵn ra câu hỏi để các học viên thảo luận.
- c. Điều khiển việc học tập tại Hội Trường.
- d. Báo cáo hằng tháng hay tổng kết sau mỗi đợt học tập lên cấp chỉ huy trực tiếp.

#### D. CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HỌC TẬP TẠI CÁC ĐƠN VỊ (Từ tháng 5 đến tháng 12-1958):

(Công dân giáo dục: 16 lần	
Thời sự	: 16 lần
Chuyên môn	: 16 lần
Văn hóa	: 16 lần
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Cộng	: 64 lần

Mỗi lần trung bình 1 giờ)

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 Tài liệu học tập—Danh sách tài liệu kê dưới đây có tính cách tổng quát.  
 Mỗi tài liệu có thể gồm nhiều tài liệu nhỏ hợp thành.

#### I/ CÔNG DÂN GIÁO DỤC

- Tài liệu 1: Vấn đề học tập (Phương pháp, ích lợi, kinh nghiệm học tập v.v...)
- Tài liệu 2: Công dân giáo dục phổ thông (quyền lợi, nhiệm vụ công dân, v.v...)
- Tài liệu 3: Tìm hiểu Hiến Pháp Việt Nam Cộng Hòa
- Tài liệu 4: Chủ trương thống nhất lãnh thổ của Chánh Phủ Cộng Hòa
- Tìm hiểu hiệp định Geneve,
  - Vấn đề sống chung hòa bình kiểu Việt Cộng
  - Thư tín Nam Bắc,
  - V.v....

- Tài liệu 5: Việt cộng phản bội kháng chiến  
 Tài liệu 6: Vấn đề phát triển cộng đồng, cải tiến dân sinh  
 Tài liệu 7: Vấn đề Viện Trợ Mỹ  
 Tài liệu 8: Công cuộc cải cách điền địa  
 Tài liệu 9: Chính sách Lao Công của Chính Phủ Cộng Hòa  
 Tài liệu 10: Chính sách Kinh Tế của Chính Phủ Cộng Hòa  
 Tài liệu 11: Vấn đề toàn dân đoàn kết (đoàn kết giữa các tôn giáo, đoàn kết giữa các nghiệp đoàn, v.v.)  
 Tài liệu 12: Kỹ thuật thông tin  
 Tài liệu 13: Chính trị học đại cương (tìm hiểu các chủ nghĩa, chính thể chính trị)  
 Tài liệu 14: Đại cương về nhân vị  
 Tài liệu 15: Hướng mới của Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng  
 Tài liệu 16: Công tác Tổ cộng đặc biệt tại:  
 -đồn điền cao su  
 -vùng giáo phái  
 -đồng bào gốc Miền  
 -đồng bào Thượng  
 -Tại các lao xá  
 -v.v....  
 Tài liệu 17: Đạo đức và tác phong người Cán Bộ  
 Tài liệu 18: Nhiệm vụ Quân Đội  
 Tài liệu 19: Tinh thần hửu Quân, Dân, Chính.  
 Tài liệu 20: Nhận định về xã hội Việt Nam dưới 3 chế độ Thực Dân, Cộng Sản và Cộng Hòa Nhân vị.  
 Tài liệu 21: Kế hoạch cổ động thi hành quân dịch  
 Tài liệu 22: Địa lý Việt Nam và Thế Giới  
 Tài Liệu 23: Kế hoạch chiến tranh tâm lý trong Quân Đội  
 Tài Liệu 24: Vụ án Văn Nghệ ngoài Bắc Việt  
 Tài Liệu 25: Việt Nam tranh đấu sử.

## II/ THỜI SỰ

- Tài liệu 1: Bản Tuyên Cáo của Chánh Phủ Cộng Hòa ngày 26-4-58 về vấn đề hiệ thương và Tổng Tyển Cừ  
 Tài liệu 2: Những thắng lợi về Ngoại Giao của Chánh Phủ Cộng Hòa  
 • Các cuộc viễn du của NGÔ TỔNG THỐNG  
 • Các hội nghị Quốc Tế họp tại Việt Nam  
 Tài Liệu 3: Lịch sử ngày 26-10

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- Tài Liệu 4: 7/7/58, lễ kỷ niệm 4 năm chấ chính của NGÔ TỔNG THỐNG.  
 Tài Liệu 5: Vụ Quỳnh Lưu chống Cộng  
 Tài Liệu 6: Minh Ước Bắc Đại Tây Dương  
 Tài Liệu 7: Minh Ước Liên Phòng Đông Nam Á  
 Tài Liệu 8: Mich Ước Bagdad  
 Tài Liệu 9: Kế Hoạch Colombo  
 Tài Liệu 10: Hội nghị Liên Minh Á Châu chống Cộng.

Cước Chú: ngoài ra, Bộ Thông Tin sẽ cung cấp các tài liệu học tập, hay chỉ thị đường lối học tập cho sát với thời cuộc và thời gian tính.

## III/CHUYỂN MÔN

- Tài Liệu 1: Sửa đổi lề lối làm việc

Tài Liệu 2 và tiếp theo: Các đề tài liên quan đến các vấn đề chuyên môn của mỗi ngành (do các Bộ, Nha chuyên môn soạn thảo).

#### IV/ VĂN HÓA

Căn cứ vào trình độ văn hóa của các nhân viên, mà mỗi cơ quan tự đề ra kế hoạch tương trợ, hướng dẫn nhân viên trong vấn đề này.

#### E. KẾT LUẬN

Trên đây là những nét chính yếu về vấn đề học tập. Mỗi cơ quan, đoàn thể đều linh động áp dụng và xin báo cáo về ban học tập Trung Ương biết rõ ưu, khuyết điểm.

Trong chương trình học tập năm 1958 như đã kể trên chỉ có tính cách đại cương; các cơ quan, đoàn thể và cá địa phương không cần phải học tập tất cả, mà nên tùy nghi lựa chọn các tài liệu cho thích hợp với hoàn cảnh và số giờ học tập của đơn vị.

Saigon, ngày 5 tháng 7 năm 1958

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Số 105-TTP/VP

Saigon, ngày 18 tháng 8 năm 1958

Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa gửi Phó Tổng Thống và các Ông Bộ Trưởng

Trích Yếu: Học tập trong nhân viên, cán bộ, quân sĩ

Tôi nhận thấy phong trào học tập tại các Bộ, Tòa và các Tỉnh không phát triển điều hòa.

Để mọi người công chức, cán bộ, quân nhân các ngạch thâm nhuần đường lối của Chính Phủ, nâng cao trình độ hiểu biết để phục vụ đắc lực hơn,

Tôi yêu cầu quý Ông coi việc học tập là một trọng tâm công tác của mỗi cơ quan. Quý Ông đích thân lãnh đạo phong trào học tập này.

Từ nay, việc học tập tổ chức theo những nguyên tắc ghi trong văn kiện đính sau đây.

Tôi yêu cầu quý Ông thi hành ngay và hàng tháng báo cáo cho tôi rõ về kết quả học tập.

Ký Tên: NGÔ ĐÌNH DIỆM

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#### CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HỌC TẬP

##### DÀN BÀI

##### Phần I: LÃNH ĐẠO HỌC TẬP

###### A. Cho Toàn Quốc

Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương

###### B. Cho Mỗi cơ quan, mỗi địa phương

1. Thành lập Ban Hướng Dẫn học tập cơ quan hay địa phương
2. Thành phần và nhiệm vụ của Ban Hướng Dẫn học tập cơ quan hay địa phương.

##### Phần II: KẾ HOẠCH HỌC TẬP

###### A. Tổ Chức

Cấp I



## Cấp II

B. Thời khóa biểu học tập

- Cấp I và cấp 2
- Toàn thể đơn vị (cơ quan hay địa phương)

C. Phương Pháp

1. Tổng quát
2. Chủ tọa
3. Thuyết Trình Viên
4. Học Viên
- D. Kiểm Tra

## Phần III. CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HỌC TẬP

A. Nội DungB. Chương trình

1. Học Tập thời sự
2. Học tập công dân giáo dục
  - a. Tài liệu xây dựng lý luận
  - b. Chủ trương và chính sách của Chính Phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa
  - c. Tìm hiểu địch
  - d. Tài liệu mở rộng kiến thức
3. Học tập chuyên môn
4. Học tập văn hóa

## Phần IV: SOẠN THẢO TÀI LIỆU

## Phần V: THƯỜNG PHẠT

- a. Đại Cương
- b. Phạt
- c. Thường

## KẾT LUẬN

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## PHẦN I

## LÃNH ĐẠO HỌC TẬP

## A. CHO TOÀN QUỐC

Nay thành lập một ỦY BAN LÃNH ĐẠO HỌC TẬP TRUNG ƯƠNG trực thuộc PHỦ TỔNG THÔN. Ban này có nhiệm vụ theo dõi, đôn đốc, kiểm tra và đề nghị mọi việc thường phạt về vấn đề học tập.

Thành Phần Ủy Ban gồm có:

- O. Bộ Trưởng tại Phủ Tổng Thống.....Chủ Tịch
- O. Bộ Trưởng Nội Vụ.....Ủy Viên
- O. Bộ Trưởng Thông Tin..... -
- O. Bộ Trưởng Giáo Dục..... -
- O. Giám Đốc Nha Chiến Tranh Tâm Lý (Bộ Quốc Phòng).. -
- Đại Diện Phong Trào Cách Mạng Quốc Gia..... -

Giúp Việc Ủy Ban có:

- Văn Phòng Thường Trực
- Ban Biên Tập

Thành phần và nhiệm vụ của Văn Phòng Thường Trực và Ban Biên Tập sẽ do Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương ấn định.

B. Cho Mỗi Cơ Quan, Mỗi Địa Phương

1/ Thành lập một Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập cho mỗi cơ quan, mỗi địa phương.  
Mỗi cơ quan (Bộ, cơ quan trực thuộc Phủ Tổng Thống), mỗi địa phương (Tòa Đại Biểu Chánh Phủ, Tòa Hành Chánh Tỉnh, Quận Xã) sẽ được coi là một đơn vị học tập.

Tại mỗi một Bộ, nếu trong Bộ có Nha nào hoặc quá đông nhân viên hoặc ở xa Bộ (như Nha Thuế Quan, Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Bảo An, Nha Tổng Giám Đốc Công An...) thì Ông Bộ Trưởng sở quan sẽ lập một Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập riêng cho Nha ấy.

2/ Thành Phần và Nhiệm Vụ

Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập mỗi cơ quan, mỗi địa phương gồm có từ 3 đến 5 người. Trưởng Ban phải là vị Chỉ Huy Trưởng cơ quan (thí dụ: O.O. Bộ Trưởng, Đại Biểu Chánh Phủ, Tỉnh Trưởng, Quận Trưởng, Chủ Tịch Xã...). Các Ủy viên trong Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập phải là những nhân viên có uy tín, có kinh nghiệm, có tinh thần hăng hái học tập, có trình độ văn hóa vững vàng, có đường lối chính trị đúng đắn.

Ban này có nhiệm vụ thi hành những chỉ thị của cấp trên về vấn đề học tập; kiểm soát, đôn đốc, đề nghị thưởng phạt các học viên.

Các Ban Học Tập hiện có của Ban Chỉ Đạo Chiến Dịch Tổ Cộng và Chi Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia đương nhiên sáp nhập vào Ban này. Như vậy, mỗi cơ quan chỉ có một bộ phận hướng dẫn học tập là Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập.

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PHẦN II

KẾ HOẠCH HỌC TẬP

A. Tổ Chức

Mỗi đơn vị (cơ quan hay địa phương) đều có 2 cấp học tập.

Cấp 1: sẽ lập tại mỗi đơn vị một tổ học tập cấp I, gồm có toàn Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập, các cấp Chỉ Huy và các nhân viên có khả năng làm Thuyết Trình của cơ quan hay của địa phương. Vị Chỉ huy Trưởng cơ quan hay địa phương chủ tọa các buổi học tập của cấp thuyết trình viên của cơ quan hay địa phương mình.

Cấp 2: sẽ lập tại mỗi cơ quan, mỗi địa phương những tổ học tập cho công chức, cán bộ, quân sĩ các cấp, gồm tối đa 20 người. Thành phần học viên của mỗi Tổ Học tập gồm có các nhân viên cùng một Phòng, một sở, một Nha, một Tòa Hành Chánh, một Quận hay một Xã. Vị Chỉ huy Trưởng của Phòng, Sở, Nha, địa phương ấy là Trưởng Tổ Học Tập. Đề cho trình độ học viên không cách biệt lắm, có thể thành lập những tổ riêng biệt cho nhân viên cán bộ, lao công, quân nhơn mà trình độ văn hóa dưới cấp bằng tiểu học.

Sau khi học tập tại cấp I, các học viên của cấp này được phân công để thuyết trình [ERASED] và chủ tọa tại cấp 2 [End ERASED].

B. Thời khóa biểu học tập

Sự học tập của mỗi cấp

Cấp I và cấp 2 mỗi tuần đều học tập một lần trong giờ làm việc. Mỗi lần khoảng từ 1 giờ đến 1 giờ 30 phút. Ngày học tập cấp I có thể lựa vào thứ ba, thứ tư và ngày học tập cấp 2 thứ năm, thứ sáu để cho học viên cấp I thấm nhuần tài liệu trước khi hướng dẫn học tập tại cấp 2.

Sự học tập của toàn thể đơn vị (cơ quan, hay địa phương)

Mỗi tháng Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập cơ quan hay địa phương sẽ tổ chức một buổi học tập chung cho cả nhân viên cán bộ, quân sĩ các cấp. Buổi học tập này có tính cách tóm tắt các tài liệu, giải đáp những thắc mắc của các cấp, các tổ.

Vị Chi Huy Trưởng của cơ quan phải đích thân điều khiển buổi học tập này. Trong trường hợp đi vắng, Chi huy Trưởng mới được ủy cho người Phụ Tá (Thí dụ: Bộ Trưởng ủy cho Đồng Lý Văn Phòng, Tổng Giám Đốc ủy cho Phó Tổng Giám Đốc, Tỉnh Trưởng ủy cho Phó Tỉnh Trưởng, Quận Trưởng ủy cho Phó Quận Trưởng v.v...) thay thế. Sự có mặt của các Chi Huy Trưởng cần thiết để làm gương và thúc đẩy phong trào học tập.

### C. Phương Pháp

#### 1. Tổng quát

Mỗi tài liệu sau khi nhận được của cấp trên sẽ đem ra học tập tại cấp I. Phải ghi lại những giải thích, những thắc mắc và câu trả lời nêu ra trong buổi học tập đó. Xong các học viên của cấp I sẽ đem tài liệu cùng các lời giải thích các câu trả lời hướng dẫn học tập tại cấp 2. Tại cấp này cũng ghi nhận những câu thắc mắc giả thích trả lời.

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Những thắc mắc quan trọng, những câu giải thích trả lời xác đáng hoặc những thắc mắc chưa giải đáp được một cách thỏa mãn thì sẽ đem ra buổi học tập hàng tháng của toàn đơn vị để giải đáp. Những thắc mắc không giải đáp thỏa mãn của toàn đơn vị sẽ trình lên cấp trên giải đáp.

Ban Hướng dẫn Học Tập chủ tọa và thuyết trình viên phải tìm những biện pháp, hình thức hấp dẫn (thí dụ: dùng bảng đen, địa đồ, tranh ảnh, con số, dùng ví dụ cụ thể, câu chuyện thực tế, kinh nghiệm các nước v.v...) trong buổi học tập để các học viên dễ thấu nhận được tài liệu học tập. Phải thúc đẩy học viên mạnh dạn tham gia ý kiến, xây dựng tài liệu.

#### 2. Chủ Tọa

Chủ tọa phải là người chỉ huy trưởng cơ quan hay Nha, Sở, Phòng. Trước mỗi buổi học tập, Chủ tọa phải hội ý, thảo luận trước với thuyết trình viên về tài liệu sẽ đem ra học tập.

#### 3. Thuyết Trình Viên

Buổi học tập có kết quả là nhờ sự thuyết trình khéo léo của thuyết trình viên. Bởi vậy, các đơn vị phải thận trọng trong việc cử các thuyết trình viên. Nên chọn các người có khả năng văn hóa, nói chuyện hấp dẫn, duyên dáng.

#### 4. Học Viên

Trong khi học tập được tự do phát biểu ý kiến, học viên phải tránh nói lạc đề, tránh phát biểu ý kiến trùng điệp, tránh làm mất thì giờ, nói tóm lại là phải có tinh thần xây dựng. Nhút nhát không được lợi dụng học tập để đã phá cá nhân, để nêu những vấn đề không liên quan trực tiếp đến đề tài học tập.

### D. Kiểm tra

Phải đặc biệt lưu ý đến việc kiểm tra, đôn đốc; phải đặt các câu hỏi về tài liệu đã học kỳ trước cho các học viên trả lời; phải lần lượt bắt chọt đến kiểm soát các Tổ học tập. Có như vậy, mới biết được ai có hay không tích cực học tập. Phải đề nghị thưởng phạt các học viên đúng mức và công bằng.

Để tiện việc kiểm soát, mỗi Tổ sẽ giữ một quyển sổ học tập trong đó có ghi những buổi học tập, số học viên có mặt, số vắng mặt, tóm tắt những thắc

mắc đã nêu ra và không giải quyết được, nhận xét về không khí học tập (sôi nổi hay tẻ nhạt), cá nhân phát biểu ý kiến rồi rào, xây dựng, v.v...).

Tóm lại, đây là một biên bản văn tắt buổi học tập

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### PHẦN III

#### CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HỌC TẬP

A. Nội dung-Nội dung học tập gồm có:

- 1/ Học tập Thời sự
- 2/ Học tập công dân giáo dục
- 3/ học tập chuyên môn
- 4/ học tập văn hóa

B. Chương Trình

1/ Học tập thời sự:

Bộ Thông tin có nhiệm vụ cung cấp thường xuyên tài liệu cho các Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập. Các Ban Hướng Dẫn phải theo dõi Việt Tân Xả và các Đài Quốc Gia cùng liên lạc với các cơ quan Thông Tin để có tài liệu thời sự.

Thời sự không phải đặt thành buổi học tập riêng trừ khi nào vấn đề thời sự ấy rất quan trọng. Mỗi lần học tập, phải dành riêng 15 phút đầu để trình bày nhưng tin tức và nhận xét về tình hình quốc gia và quốc tế, đó là học tập thời sự.

2/ Học Tập Công Dân Giáo Dục:

Những đề tài dưới đây có tính cách tổng quát, được kể ra để làm thí dụ; nơi nào đã học tập rồi, sẽ không phải học lại. Nếu học tập chưa kỹ, vẫn phải học lại. Mỗi đơn vị nên tùy nghi thêm bớt đề tài liệu được thích hợp với đặc tính địa phương hay cá tính của cơ quan.

a. Tài liệu xây dựng lý luận:

- Vấn đề học tập (phương pháp, ích lợi, kinh nghiệm học tập, v.v...)
- Nhiệm vụ và quyền lợi công dân
- Tác phong và đạo đức nhân viên cán bộ
- Sửa đổi lề lối làm việc
- Tinh đoàn kết quân, dân, chính
- Vấn đề đoàn kết toàn dân
- Hiến pháp Việt Nam Cộng Hòa
- Chính Trị Đại Cương (tìm hiểu các chủ nghĩa, chính thể chính trị)
- Quân dịch là nhiệm vụ công dân nước độc lập.
- Đại cương về nhân vị
- Đại cương về cộng đồng

b. Chủ Trương và chính sách của chính phủ Việt Nam Cộng Hòa

- Đường lối cách mạng quốc gia
  - Bài phong, đả thực, diệt cộng
  - Xây dựng nền Cộng Hòa nhân vị.
- Chủ trương thống nhất lãnh thổ của Chánh Phủ Việt Nam Cộng hòa (Căn cứ theo bản tuyên cáo của Chánh Phủ ngày 26.4.58).
- Võ trang tinh thần, võ trang vật chất
- Vấn đề viện trợ Mỹ
- Cải cách điền địa
- Chính sách lao động

- Chính sách kinh tế
- Chiến dịch Tổ Cộng
- Chính sách Thương

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- Kết hoạch Dinh Điền
- Kế Hoạch nông tin
- Chánh sách giáo dục, v.v....

c. Tìm hiểu địch (học tập giai đoạn)

- Việt Cộng phân bội kháng chiến
- Việt Cộng chia cắt đất nước
- Cải cách ruộng đất và chính sách đầu tổ của miền Bắc
- Thuế nông nghiệp và các thứ thuế bóc lột tại Bắc Phần
- Độc quyền kinh tế của Đảng Cộng Sản (quốc doanh mậu dịch)
- Chính sách lao động cưỡng bách của Việt Cộng
- Mức sống tại Bắc Phần
- Chế độ độc quyền báo chí ấn loát
- Chế độ độc tài đảng trị của Cộng Sản
- Vụ án Văn Nghệ ngoài Bắc Việt
- Đồng bào Bắc Việt tranh đấu đòi tự do dân chủ (vụ Quỳnh Lưu, v.v..)
- Âm mưu xâm lược của đế quốc đờ
- Chiêu bài sống chung hòa bình của Cộng Sản
- Âm mưu chính phủ quốc cộng liên hiệp của Cộng Sản
- Âm mưu hiệp thương quan hệ bình thường của Việt Cộng

d. Tài liệu mở rộng kiến thức

- Những thắng lợi về ngoại giao của Chính Phủ Cộng Hòa:
  - Các cuộc viễn du của Ngô Tổng Thống
  - Các phái đoàn Việt Nam xuất ngoại
  - Các Hộ Nghij Quốc tế họp tại Việt nam
  - 7.7.58 lễ Kỷ Niệm năm chấp chánh của Ngô Tổng Thống
  - Lịch sử ngày 26-10
  - Minh ước Bắc Đại Tây Dương
  - Minh ước Liên Phòng đông nam Á
  - Minh Ước Bagdad
  - Kế Hoạch Colombo
  - Lien Minh Á Châu chống Cộng
  - Hộ Nghị Bandung 1955
  - Liên Hiệp Quốc v.v....
  - Sự giải phóng cá dân tộc nhược tiểu

3/ Học tập chuyên môn

Chuyên môn là việc học tập bổ túc của nghề nghiệp, nhắm mục đích nâng cao kỹ thuật, tang năng xuất của nhân viên, cán bộ.

Mỗi Bộ, Nha chuyên môn nên tự lập chương trình, chọn lự lấy tài liệu định ngày giờ thích hợp (ngoài việc học tập công dân giáo dục mỗi tuần) để hướng dẫn nhân viên, cán bộ học tập. Nếu cần, mỗi Bộ mở lớp tu nghiệp ngắn hạn, trung hạn cho nhân viên, cán bộ.

4/ Học Tập Văn Hóa

Căn cứ vào trình độ văn hóa của các nhân viên, cán bộ, mỗi cơ quan nên đề ra kế hoạch tương trợ, thúc đẩy nhân viên trong vấn đề này, tham dự các lớp học tối, học thêm sinh ngữ, ghi tên học các trường Đại Học v.v...

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## PHẦN IV

## SOẠN THẢO TÀI LIỆU

Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương có nhiệm vụ trù liệu những tài liệu học tập cần thiết bằng cách:

- Giao cho các Bộ, Nha soạn thảo
- Mở các cuộc thi tuyển lựa tài liệu
- Thúc đẩy các địa phương soạn gởi về

Để nắm vững chủ trương và chính sách của Chính Phủ, các Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập đơn vị muốn đề nghị một đề tài nào Học Tập Trung Ương 4 bản để Ban này xét duyệt trước khi đưa ra học tập. Các đề tài về chuyên môn chỉ cần đệ trình 2 bản để lưu hồ sơ mà không phải đợi Ban Lãnh đạo Trung Ương chấp thuận. Các đề tài về chuyên môn thì do Ông Bộ Trưởng sở quan chấp thuận là đủ.

Mỗi tài liệu đều hải soạn thành 2 bậc khác nhau.

- Tài liệu dùng cho cấp I học tập
- Tài liệu dùng cho cấp II học tập. Tài liệu bậc này nên soạn theo thể vấn đáp.

## PHẦN V

## THƯỜNG PHẠT

## A. Đại Cương

Trong khi thi hành Thông tư, nên chú trọng đến tinh thần, thái độ học tập của các học viên. Những sát ngữ cuối năm hay đề nghị thăng thưởng cho mỗi nhân viên đều có căn cứ thêm vào sự nhận xét về công tác học tập.

Ban hướng dẫn Học Tập đơn vị phải đặc biệt lưu ý và thận trọng trong việc đề nghị thưởng phạt các học viên.

## B. Phạt

Hình thức phạt các học viên gồm có

- 1/ Cảnh cáo
- 2/ Cảnh cáo tại Tổ. Hi học viên phạm tội nhẹ.
- 3/ Cảnh cáo tại Đơn vị. Khi học viên phạm lỗi nặng hơn.
- 4/ Áp dụng kỷ luật công chức, cán bộ hay quân đội (cảnh cáo ghi vào hồ sơ lý lịch, thuyên chủ, giáng chức, sa thải...) khi lỗi nặng và tái phạm.

## C. Thưởng

Tùy theo thành tích, tinh thần học tập của các học viên mà tuyên dương công trạng:

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## 1/ Tuyên dương tại Tổ học tập

Mỗi tuần, Tổ sẽ đề nghị ghi tên học viên xuất sắc nhất vào bảng danh dự của Tổ. Mỗi tháng Tổ đề nghị tên học viên được ghi vào bảng danh dự của đơn vị.

## 2/ Tuyên dương tại đơn vị học tập.

Ban Hướng dẫn học tập đơn vị xét định học viên xuất sắc nhất trong mỗi tháng. Teen học viên xuất sắc này đều được ghi tại bảng danh dự học tập của đơn vị và các bảng danh dự của mỗi Tổ trong suốt tháng.

Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập đơn vị sẽ báo cáo về Trung Ương tên và thành tích học viên được tuyên dương mỗi tháng.

## 3/Ghi vào phiếu điểm hàng năm

Nhận xét về mỗi học viên học tập phải được ghi vào phiếu điểm hàng năm.

## 4/ Đề nghị thăng thưởng đặc biệt giữa năm

Mỗi khi có thành tích hết sức đặc biệt.

Trên đây chỉ la những nét chính yếu về vấn đề học tập, mọi chi tiết khác sẽ do Ủy Ban Lãnh Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương chi thị sau.

[END OF DOCUMENT 3]

Source: Tổng Quan Thuế 3726, *Hồ sơ v/v học tập các đề tài chính trị trong năm 1965.*

[BEGINNING OF DOCUMENT 4]

VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA  
 PHỦ CHỦ TỊCH  
 ỦY BAN HÀNH PHÁP TRUNG ƯƠNG  
 Saigon, ngày 11 tháng 10 năm 1965

số 69/UBHP/CT

THÔNG TƯ  
 Kính gửi:  
 Quý Ông      TÔNG ỦY VIÊN  
                   ỦY VIÊN  
                   THƯ KÝ

SAIGON  
 Đồng kính gửi:  
 Quý Ông      Tư Lệnh Vùng kiêm Đại Biểu Chánh Phủ  
                   Đô Trưởng, Thị Trưởng, Tỉnh Trưởng

Trích yếu: v/v tổ chức hội thảo tại các cơ quan

Sau ba tháng thực nghiệm hội thảo tại các cơ quan toàn quốc, do Bộ Tâm Lý Chiến thực hiện, với sự yểm trợ hữu hiệu của quý Bộ, Vùng, Thành, Thị, Tỉnh, tôi nhận thấy phong trào hội thảo có nhiều tiến triển rất khả quan và thuận lợi.

Nay đã đến lúc nên củng cố lại các cơ sở hội thảo, theo một hệ thống tổ chức tương đối chặt chẽ hơn, hầu bảo đảm cho công tác xây dựng tư tưởng nhân viên, cán bộ công quyền, đạt được nhiều kết quả mong muốn.

Vậy xin quý Ông xét cho chính bị lại tổ chức hội thảo, theo các thể thức đại cương như dưới đây.

**A. QUAN NIỆM**

Hội thảo là công tác học tập thể, trong tinh thần dân chủ cởi mở và cách mạng xây dựng, nhằm mục đích giúp công chức cán bộ các ngành hoạt động quốc gia:

1. Xây dựng tư tưởng, chân chính tác phong, gây phong trào phục vụ mới và nhất là thông suốt chủ trương chánh sách quốc gia, hầu áp dụng đúng đắn và hữu hiệu (phần tổng quát);
2. Đồng thời, trau dồi kỹ thuật, trao đổi kinh nghiệm, phát huy sáng kiến, hầu nâng cao trình độ chuyên môn của mỗi người và mỗi ngành (phần chuyên môn).

**B. NGUYÊN TẮC TỔ CHỨC**

Một Ban Hội Thảo được thiết lập tại các cơ quan từ Trung Ương đến cơ sở địa phương, theo thể thức sau đây:

Tại Trung Ương và Vùng: theo đơn vị Nha Sở biệt lập  
 Tại Tỉnh, Thành, Thị: Theo đơn vị toàn quận  
 Tại Quận, Xã: Theo đơn vị toàn quận, toàn xã



Bann Hội thảo gồm có:

- 1 Trưởng ban
- 1 Ủy Viên Tổ chức
- 1 Chủ Tịch Đoàn
- 1 Thuyết trình đoàn
- 1 Thư Ký đoàn

Vị Trưởng nhiệm sở đơn vị hội thảo đương nhiên làm Trưởng Ban và chọn một nhân viên có khả năng về tổ chức làm Ủy Viên tổ chức, một số nhân viên sung vào Chủ Tịch Đoàn, Thuyết trình đoàn, và Thư Ký đoàn các buổi hội thảo.

Trưởng ban kiểm tra, đôn đốc theo dõi công tác hội thảo. Ủy viên tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, lập chương trình, phúc trình kết quả. Chủ tịch đoàn thay phiên nhau chủ tọa, thuyết trình đoàn thay phiên nhau thuyết trình, và thư ký đoàn thay phiên nhau làm thư ký.

Tại Trung Ương, một Hội Đồng hướng dẫn tài liệu, thành phần gồm có: Ông Viện Trưởng Học Viên Quốc Gia Hành Chánh, đại diện Phủ Chủ Tịch, làm chủ tịch, Ông Tổng Cục Trưởng Chiến Tranh Chính Trị, đại diện Bộ Quốc Phòng làm Phó Chủ Tịch, Ông Đồng Lý Bộ Tâm Lý Chiến làm Tổng Thư Ký, quý Ông Đồng Lý Bộ Nội Vụ và Bộ Giáo Dục làm Ủy Viên, có nhiệm vụ ấn định chương trình và soạn thảo tài liệu các đề tài tổng quát.

#### C. NGUYÊN TẮC ĐIỀU HÀNH

Tại mỗi đơn vị hội thảo, mỗi tháng tổ chức 2 lần hội thảo trong cơ quan, vào giờ làm việc, vào một ngày nhất định, thời lượng 2 giờ:

- 1 lần dành cho việc hội thảo đề tài tổng quát
- 1 lần dành cho việc hội thảo đề tài chuyên môn

Việc hội thảo mỗi đề tài được diễn tiến theo trình tự:

- Thuyết trình
- Thảo luận và giải đáp thắc mắc
- Tổng kết

Tài liệu hội thảo về các đề tài tổng quát do Hội Đồng Hướng Dẫn tài liệu cung cấp, Tài Liệu chuyên môn do Bộ Sở Quan cung cấp.

#### D. BÁO CÁO

Mỗi buổi hội thảo đều được lập thành biên bản:

##### 1. Về các đề tài tổng quát:

Tất cả biên bản của cấp Xã đều được gửi về Chi Tâm Lý Chiến đúc kết, để trình Quận và Ty Tâm Lý Chiến.

Tất cả biên bản của cấp Quận, Tỉnh đều được gửi đến Ty Tâm Lý Chiến đúc kết, để trình và Bộ Tâm Lý Chiến.

Tất cả biên bản của cấp Vùng đều được gửi đến Nha Đại Diện Tâm Lý Chiến đúc kết, để trình Vùng và Bộ Tâm Lý Chiến.

Tất cả biên bản của cấp Trung Ương đều được gửi về Bộ Sở quan đúc kết, để gửi đến Bộ Tâm Lý Chiến tổng kết trình Phủ Chủ Tịch Ủy Ban Hành Pháp Trung Ương.

##### 2. Về các đề tài chuyên môn:

Việc chuyển gửi biên bản hội thảo do Bộ sở quan ấn định.

Tôi xin yêu cầu quý Ông đặc biệt lưu tâm đẩy mạnh phong trào hội thảo này trong các cơ quan ngày càng lớn mạnh, dầu duy trì và tấn triển tinh thần phục vụ và tinh thần chiến đấu của toàn thể nguồn nhân lực của chính quyền cách mạng, đáp ứng hữu hiệu nhu cầu quốc gia đòi hỏi.

Ký tên: Thiếu Tướng NGUYỄN CAO KỶ

Bản sao gửi:

- Văn Phòng Phủ Chủ Tịch, UBLĐQG
- Các Nha, Sở tại Phủ Chủ Tịch UBHPTW và các Cơ quan trực thuộc

[END of DOCUMENT 4]

## DOCUMENT 5

Source: Phủ Tổng Thống Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 30273, *Phát động phong trào học tập trên toàn quốc năm 1969.*

STT  
ST/21/7  
Xét duyệt  
52

VIỆT-NAM CỘNG-HÒA  
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BỘ THÔNG TIN  
--+

Số : 2958/UBODHT /TU 52  
/ Ông TRƯỞNG CHIÊU HỒI kiêm THÔNG TIN  
CHỦ TỊCH ỦY BAN CHỈ ĐẠO HỌC TẬP TRUNG-  
ƯƠNG.

**VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA**

Kính gửi :

- Quý vị Quốc Vụ Khanh, Tổng Trưởng, Bộ Trưởng
- Đô Trưởng
- Thị Trưởng
- Tỉnh Trưởng

Trích yếu : Phong trào học tập toàn quốc  
Tham chiếu : Nghị định số 580-NĐ/P.Th.T/VP ngày 22-5-69 và Thông tư số 63-TT/P.Th.T/VP ngày 22-5-69 của Phủ Thủ Tướng.

-/-

Thưa Quý Vị,

Tổng Thống đã quan tâm đặc biệt đến phong trào học tập toàn quốc nên chẳng những đã chỉ thị đẩy mạnh phong trào cho sâu rộng và qui cũ, mà còn đích thân nói chuyện tại Trung Ương về đề tài "Hiện tình đất nước" ngày 26-7-69 vừa qua tại rạp Thống nhất.

Vậy tiếp theo Phiếu gửi số 4614-BTT/UBHPTƯ ngày 24-6-69 về tài liệu "Không Liên hiệp với Cộng Sản", và trong khuôn khổ các buổi học tập định kỳ Ủy Ban chỉ đạo học tập Trung Ương thỉnh cầu Quý Vị vui lòng chỉ thị cho tổ chức trong tháng 8/69 học tập đề tài "Hiện tình đất nước" theo tinh thần bài nói chuyện nêu trên của Tổng Thống.

Trân trọng kính chào Quý Vị./-

Bản sao kính gửi :

- Văn Phòng Tổng Thư Ký
- Phủ Tổng Thống
- Văn Phòng Đồng Lý Văn Phòng
- Phủ Phó Tổng Thống
- VP Ông Chánh Văn Phòng Đặc Biệt Phủ Thủ Tướng

SAIGON, ngày 30 tháng 7 năm 1969

Ông gửi :

- Ông Phụ Tá Đặc Biệt
- Ông Đồng Lý Văn Phòng
- Ông Phụ Tá các Khối
- Thanh Tra Trưởng
- Các Giám Đốc
- Đại Diện Thông Tin tại các Vùng CT
- Sở Thông Tin ĐC Thành
- Trường Ty Thông Tin
- "đề yêu cầu phối hợp công tác"

**VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA**  
**TỔNG-TRƯỞNG**  
**BỘ THÔNG TIN**

Giáo sư NGUYỄN-NGỌC-AN

6631

31.2.69  
42/2/13

VIỆT-NAM CỘNG-HÒA  
BỘ THÔNG TIN  
ỦY BAN CHỈ ĐẠO HỌC TẬP TRUNG ƯƠNG

872  
20/8 Xinh  
L. Sinh  
Xinh  
ninh

SAIGON, ngày 31 tháng 7 năm 1969

Số : 2962 /BTT/UBCHT/TU.

5/6  
53

/// Ông Trưởng Chiêu Hồi kiêm Thông tin  
Chủ tịch Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương

Kính gửi :

Quý Ông Tổng Trưởng, Bộ Trưởng  
Đô Trưởng, Thị Trưởng, Tỉnh Trưởng

TÒAN QUỐC

Đề mục : V/v tổ chức và điều hành công tác học tập.

Thêm chiếu : - Thông tư số 063-TT/PThT/VP ngày 22-5-1969.  
- Nghị định số 566-NĐ/PThT/VP ngày 22-5-1969.

-/-

Tuân hành chỉ thị của Tổng Thống và trong khuôn khổ các hoạt động chính yếu của cuộc động viên chính trị và tinh thần dân chúng, trân trọng kính tin quý vị các cơ cấu tổ chức và điều hành công tác học tập ghi trong các văn thư dẫn thường sẽ được tổ chức theo các chi tiết sau đây.

I.- QUAN NIỆM CÔNG TÁC

11.- Công tác học tập phải được coi là một công tác cần thiết ngang với các công tác chuyên môn của mỗi Bộ, mỗi ngành để nâng cao trình độ kiến thức, phát huy thời độ tốt, củng cố lập trường chống cộng và gia tăng hiệu năng công tác và tinh thần phục vụ nhân dân của công chức, quân nhân và cán bộ.

12.- Công tác học tập phải thực hiện thường xuyên, đều đặn và thống nhất từ trên xuống dưới trong toàn quốc.

13.- Việc học tập phải coi là một trách vụ của các công chức, cán bộ, quân nhân và chỉ có kết quả nếu biết thực hiện trong tinh thần cầu tiến bản thân và tinh thần dân chủ nghĩa là :

- tránh tình trạng nhồi sọ một chiều, suy tôn cá nhân, quảng cáo cho bè phái.
- Lấy việc thảo luận bình đẳng làm tiêu chuẩn xây dựng, phát huy sáng kiến và lượng giá kết quả cứ mỗi buổi học tập.

VIỆT-NAM CỘNG-HÒA  
BỘ THÔNG TIN  
ỦY BAN CHỈ ĐẠO HỌC TẬP TRUNG ƯƠNG  
1.8.69  
42.69-13

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14.- Công tác học tập phải đạt được các mục tiêu dưới đây :

- Tạo cơ hội cho mỗi học viên thông qua một chủ trương, đường lối chính sách của chính phủ để củng cố lập trường, xây dựng, tác phong đúng đắn và gia tăng hiệu năng phục vụ tổ quốc và nhân dân.

- Nâng cao trình độ hiểu biết về các vấn đề thời sự để khỏi bị hoang mang giao động trước các luận điệu tuyên truyền xuyên tạc của đối phương gồm Cộng Sản và bọn chủ bại, thân Cộng ...

- Tạo tinh thần đoàn kết tương thân tương ái và thông cảm giúp các đồng nghiệp và giải tỏa các thắc mắc, hiểu lầm nếu có.

- Phát huy sáng kiến góp phần vào công tác giải quyết các công việc trong tinh thần tự túc tự lực tự cường.

## II.- THÀNH PHẦN THAM GIẢ HỌC TẬP

1.- Toàn thể cán bộ công chức các ngành, các cấp kể cả viên chức xã ấp.

2.- Sĩ quan, binh sĩ thuộc Quân Đội Việt Nam Cộng Hòa và các lực lượng bán quân sự như Cảnh Sát, Nhân Dân Tự Vệ.

## III.- TỔ CHỨC HỌC TẬP

### A/ Tổ chức tại Trung Ương

Tại Trung Ương hệ thống chỉ đạo gồm có Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương và Ban hướng dẫn học tập tại các Bộ và cơ quan tự trị.

A1.- Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương được thành lập do Nghị Định số 586 HĐ/PTH/VP gồm có :

0.0. Tổng Trưởng Thông Tin	Chủ tịch
Đại diện Tổng Trưởng Nội Vụ	Phó Chủ tịch
Đại diện Tổng Trưởng Giáo Dục và T.N.	Ủy Viên
Đại diện Tổng Trưởng Leo Động	"
Đại diện Tổng Trưởng Chiêu Hồi	"
Đại diện Tổng Trưởng Xây Dựng Nông Thôn	"
Đại diện Tổng Trưởng Quốc Phòng	"
(Tổng Cục Chiến Tranh Chính Trị) Tổng Thư ký	

Thành phần ủy ban có thể mở rộng để mời thêm các Bộ khác nếu có những đề tài chuyên môn liên hệ. Thí dụ thêm Bộ Canh Nông nếu cần học tập về vấn đề cải cách điền địa.

Ủy Ban có nhiệm vụ :

- Chỉ đạo phong trào học tập toàn quốc.
- Nghiên cứu đường lối tổ chức cùng chỉ thị công tác.
- Theo dõi hoạt động cùng phúc trình diễn tiến và kết quả công tác lên Tổng Thống và Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ.

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- 3 -

A2.- Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương có một văn phòng thường trực do một văn phòng trưởng điều khiển với sự cộng tác của một số nhân viên do các Bộ liên hệ biệt phái đến giúp việc ủy ban.

Văn phòng thường trực đặt trụ sở tại Bộ Thông Tin số 79-81 đường Phan Đình Phùng Saigon. Điện thoại số 91696 - 91697/78 và có nhiệm vụ :

- Chuẩn bị tài liệu cho các phiên nhóm của Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Trung Ương.
- Hướng dẫn và điều hành các tiểu ban chuyên môn trong văn phòng thường trực.
- Điều hành các công tác học tập như phân phối tài liệu, giải đáp thắc mắc, phổ biến các chỉ thị của Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương, đúc kết báo cáo của các ban hướng dẫn học tập để trình thượng cấp, đề nghị các biện pháp hướng dẫn và đẩy mạnh phong trào học tập.

A3.- Văn phòng thường trực có hai tiểu ban chuyên môn :

- Tiểu ban biên tập do một trưởng ban điều khiển với sự cộng tác của một số biên tập viên do các Bộ liên hệ biệt phái thường trực tại Bộ Thông Tin. Ban biên tập có nhiệm vụ biên soạn tài liệu, giải đáp thắc mắc của các địa phương và đề nghị các đề tài để Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Trung Ương chọn lựa và chuẩn y.
- Tiểu ban đúc kết báo cáo có nhiệm vụ kiểm tra, đôn đốc và đúc kết các báo cáo để trình thượng cấp.

B/ Tại các Bộ và Cơ Quan Tự Trị

B1.- Tại các Bộ, các Tổng Nha biệt lập và các cơ quan tự trị có một ban hướng dẫn và một thuyết trình đoàn.

Ban hướng dẫn gồm có 5 người : Trưởng Ban, Phó Trưởng Ban và Thư Ký và 2 Ủy viên học tập. Vị Trưởng cơ quan đương nhiên làm trưởng ban hướng dẫn và có nhiệm vụ :

- Tổ chức và hướng dẫn các buổi học tập tại cơ quan.
- Kiểm tra, đôn đốc, phúc trình kết quả lên Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Trung Ương.

B2.- Đơn Nha hoặc Sở biệt lập được coi là một <sup>đơn</sup> vị học tập trực thuộc ban hướng dẫn Bộ hoặc Tổng Nha. Tại mỗi đơn vị có một ban hướng dẫn đơn vị gồm 3 người do đơn vị trưởng cơ quan đương nhiên làm trưởng ban và một thuyết trình đoàn để phụ trách công tác thuyết trình. Thuyết trình viên có thể luân phiên để thay đổi không khí. Nhân số không hạn định, tuy nhiên tối thiểu mỗi đơn vị phải có tối thiểu 2 thuyết trình viên để tham dự các lớp huấn luyện của trung ương hoặc tham dự các buổi thuyết trình cấp I dành riêng cho các thuyết trình viên.

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C/ Tại các địa phương (rừng, thị xã, quận)

C1.- Ủy Ban Điều Hợp Tâm Lý Chiến đấu phương địa phương chiến khu nhiệm Ủy Ban Hướng dẫn học tập tỉnh, có nhiệm vụ ghi tại điều B1.

C2.- Tùy theo hoàn cảnh về vị trí địa phương các ty sở địa phương có thể tổ chức thành một đơn vị học tập hay nhiều đơn vị học tập như đã ghi tại điều B2.

D/ Tại các đơn vị trong quân đội

D1.- Tại các Nha Sở trực thuộc Bộ Quốc Phòng sẽ tổ chức học tập như các Bộ khác.

D2.- Tại các binh chủng và đơn vị chiến đấu việc học tập sẽ do Tổng Cục Chiến Tranh Chính Trị phụ trách. Tuy nhiên cần cố gắng sắp xếp cho việc học tập có thể thống nhất và song hành với các đề tài học tập bên các tổ chức dân sự.

IV.- DIỄN TRÌNH HỌC TẬP

41.- Công tác học tập được thực hiện làm hai cấp :

- Cấp 1 dành riêng cho các thuyết trình viên hoặc các ủy viên trong ban hướng dẫn học tập đơn vị để thông suốt đề tài và đã thông thắc mắc trước khi tổ chức học tập tại cấp 2.

- Cấp 2 dành cho toàn thể công chức, cán bộ hay quân nhân trong đơn vị.

/bè tháng kể  
từ ngày

42.- Các buổi học tập đều được tổ chức trong giờ làm việc. Thời gian từ 1 giờ 30 đến 2 giờ là tối đa.

43.- Các buổi học tập phải tổ chức nghiêm chỉnh có chủ tọa đoàn, thuyết trình viên cùng thư ký đoàn cùng các nghi lễ thông thường như chào cờ, mặc niệm các chiến sĩ v.v... Sau mỗi buổi hội thảo phải làm báo cáo ghi rõ các thắc mắc do các học viên nêu ra cùng những thắc mắc không giải đáp được cần phải do trung ương giải đáp.

44.- Sau 4 kỳ học tập các đơn vị có thể tổ chức đại hội tổng kết học tập để gây không khí hào hứng học tập và khen thưởng các đơn vị xuất sắc.

V.- BÁO CÁO

51.- Ban hướng dẫn học tập các Bộ, Tổng Nha biệt lập, các cơ quan tự trị có nhiệm vụ đúc kết báo cáo học tập của cơ quan mình gửi về Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương trước ngày 30 mỗi tháng.

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52.- Ủy Ban Điều Hợp Tâm Lý Chiến Bộ, Tỉnh, Thị Xã có nhiệm vụ đúc kết các báo cáo của các đơn vị trong tỉnh, các Quận Xã gửi thẳng về Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương.

53.- Nội dung báo cáo cần ghi rõ số đơn vị đã tổ chức học tập, các đơn vị không tổ chức được kèm theo lý do tại sao, các thắc mắc đã được nêu lên kể cả những thắc mắc không có lợi cho ta (đính kèm mẫu báo cáo)

#### VI.- LINH TINH

61.- Ủy Ban Chỉ Đạo Học Tập Trung Ương sẽ cung cấp các tài liệu học tập cho các ban hướng dẫn trung ương cũng như địa phương.

62.- Các ban hướng dẫn trung ương và địa phương có nhiệm vụ ấn hành thêm các tài liệu do trung ương gửi về để cung cấp cho các học viên.

Để công tác học tập có thể thu được nhiều kết quả như sự mong ước của Tổng Thống và Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ trân trọng kính thỉnh cầu quý vị chỉ thị cho các cấp trực thuộc thi hành nghiêm chỉnh các chi tiết ghi trên để Bộ tôi có đầy đủ tài liệu trình lên Thượng cấp.

#### Bản sao kính gửi :

- Ông Tổng Trưởng Phủ Thủ Tướng  
"để kính tường"
- Văn Phòng Phủ Thủ Tướng  
(Ông CVP đặc biệt Phủ Thủ Tướng)  
"để trình Thủ Tướng kính tường"

#### Đồng gửi :

- Đại Tá Phụ Tá Tổng Trưởng Thông Tin
- Ông Đồng Lý Văn Phòng Bộ Thông Tin
- Ông Tổng Giám Đốc Việt Tân Xã
- Ông Tổng Giám Đốc Cục Vô Tuyến Truyền Thanh
- Quý Ông Phụ Tá
- Thanh Tra Trưởng - Giám Đốc - Chánh Sự Vụ  
Quản Đốc tại Bộ
- Đại diện Thông Tin các Vùng Chiến Thuật
- Trưởng Ty Thông Tin toàn quốc
- Trưởng Chi Thông Tin Phú Quốc
- "Đặc tướng" u ~~ở các~~
- ~~nhân viên trực thuộc~~



NGUYỄN NGỌC AN



DOCUMENT 6

Source: Phủ Thủ Tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970.*

Số 185/122/10

30445/03

VIỆT-NAM CỘNG-HÒA  
PHỦ-THỦ-TƯỚNG

HỘI-ĐỒNG BÌNH-ĐỊNH  
VÀ PHÁT-TRIỂN /TƯ.

Số 2056 /PThT/BDPT/TƯ.

I  
H Ò N G - T Ư  
- o -

Trích yếu : Chương trình hướng dẫn kỹ thuật Thông-Tin cho nam nữ Công chức tại Trung-Ương.

Tham chiếu : Huấn thị chỉ đạo số: 031/TT/VOP/HT/TM ngày 8-5-70 của Tổng-Thống Việt-Nam Cộng-Hào.

Thông tư số: 1626/PThT/BDPT/KH ngày 30-6-70 của THỦ-TƯỚNG CHÍNH-PHỦ ấn định Kế hoạch BDPT Đặc biệt 1970.

Văn thư số: 95/BTT/VP/M ngày 10-6-70 của Tổng-Trưởng Thông-Tin kiêm Tổng Thư Ký UB.TTĐC/TƯ.

HỎA TỐC

*2*

*VP/Grp*

*Khóa I : Đ. Chiêu*

*II : Đ. Chính*

*và tiếp theo*

*9/2*

*TRUNG TÂM TƯ*

I - Thông Tư này được phổ biến nhằm ấn định tổ chức và Chương-trình huấn luyện kỹ thuật Thông-Tin dành cho Công chức bên bộ các cơ cấu Trung-Ương kể từ tháng 7/70 trong giai đoạn II BDPT/70 ( Theo phụ bản III chiến dịch TTĐC của Thông-Tư 1626 dẫn chiếu :


A) Bộ Thông-Tin chịu trách nhiệm :

- 1- Tổ chức khóa huấn luyện đoàn kỳ liên tục trong 4 tháng giai đoạn II BDPT/70, mỗi khóa 1tuần lễ, kể từ tháng 7-1970 đến tháng 10-1970.
- 2- Soạn thảo ấn lát tài liệu cung cấp cho học viên cốt cứ thuyết trình viên, sắp đặt đủ chỗ cho 100 khóa sinh mỗi khóa, tại Trung Ương Huấn luyện Trung Ương Bộ Thông-Tin số 77 Trần-Nhan-Tôn SAIGON.
- 3- Cung cấp tài liệu và cốt cứ thuyết trình viên cho các khóa huấn luyện do các Cơ Quan Tự-Trị tổ chức ngay tại cơ quan dành cho nhân viên, cán bộ trực thuộc.

B) Các cơ cấu Trung Ương (Phủ-Bộ).

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30445/ 04

- Các cán bộ nam nữ công chức, cán bộ tham dự lớp khóa Huấn luyện, do Bộ Thông-Tin phụ-Trách tổ chức theo lịch trình và số lượng ấn định trong phụ bản đính hậu.

- Danh sách học viên phải được gửi cho Bộ Thông-Tin liên sắp xếp trước một tuần trước ngày khai giảng, riêng khóa I trước ngày 9-7-70.

- Khóa I ưu tiên cho các viên chức thuộc Ban Tham Mưu Thông-Tin Đại-Chúng.

- Học viên sẽ theo chế độ ngoại trú.

II- Các Phủ Bộ trừ liệu xen kẽ vào chương trình huấn luyện chuyên môn tại Bộ những giờ hướng dẫn kỹ thuật Thông Tin cho số công chức cán bộ còn lại, thông báo Bộ Thông-Tin cốt cử thuyết trình viên hướng dẫn và cung cấp tài liệu.

III- Chương trình hướng dẫn kỹ thuật Thông-Tin cho Công chức cán bộ các cấp theo bình thân huấn thị chỉ đạo của Tổng-Thống VNCH phải được các Phủ Bộ, cơ quan tự trị tích cực thi hành cho đúng mức định. Ngoại trừ Bộ Quốc Phòng) Tổng Cục Chiến Trách Chính-Trị tiếp tục đảm trách phần hướng dẫn kỹ thuật Tâm Lý Chiến.

Saigon, ngày 06 tháng 7 năm 1970

THỦ-TƯỚNG CHÍNH-PHỦ

Nơi nhận

- Các Phủ, Bộ.
- Các Cơ Quan Tự Trị  
(qua các Bộ liên hệ chuyên  
giao).
- (để thi hành).
- Phủ Tổng-Thống  
"Để kính tường trình.

*Trần-Thiên-Khiêm*

TRẦN-THIÊN-KHIÊM



Chông - Trình  
Thông-Tin Đại - Chung

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I- QUÁ TRÌNH

Trước đây, do Nghị-định số 767-TT ngày 13.4.1964 của Thủ-Tướng Chính-Fủ, được sửa đổi do Nghị-định số 172-BĐ/TT ngày 1.2.1968 của Chủ-Tịch Ủy-Ban Hành-Pháp Trung-Ưong, một cơ-cấu được thành lập gọi là Ủy-Ban Điều-Hợp Tâm-Lý-Chiến, từ Trung-Ưong xuống Vùng Chiến-Thuat, Tỉnh và Quận, có nhiệm vụ thực thi chương-trình Tâm-Lý-Chiến trên toàn quốc. (Slide 1 và 2)

Vì thành phần của Ủy-Ban Trung-Ưong quá thu hẹp nên hoạt-động của Ủy-Ban chỉ có soạn thảo các kế-hoạch và chương trình Tâm-lý-chiến và tổ-chức các phiên họp liên Bộ để thông qua những kế-hoạch ấy.

Văn-phòng thường trực của Ủy-Ban cũng chỉ tổ-chức sơ sài với một Ông Giám-Đốc Nha Nghiên-Cứu Kế-Hoạch Bộ Thông-Tin làm Ủy-Viên thường trực. Phương tiện vì thế quá sơ hẹp nên không chịu toàn được nhiệm-vụ.

II- CẢI TỔ

Đến gần cuối năm 1969, sau cái chết của BỐ-CHÍ-MINH (2.9.69), sau khi CS chiếm ngôi vào ban hoa đàm ở Bơ-lê, nhất là sau những kết-quả rực rỡ của chương-trình BDM của ta, Chính-Fủ nhận thấy đã đến lúc cần thúc đẩy mạnh công-tác Thông-Tin ở trên hai bình-diện :  
- Xây dựng Cán-bộ Quân Cảnh của ta cho có lập-trường quốc-Gia vững chắc, - Vận-động quần chúng tích-cực tham gia vào nỗ lực chung đi đến chiến thắng cuối cùng.

Do đó, ngày 28.10.1969, Thủ-Tướng Chính-Fủ đã ký Nghị-định số 1147-a/BĐ/TH/VP giải tán các Ủy-Ban Điều-Hợp Tâm-Lý-Chiến và Ủy-Ban Chỉ-Đạo học tập các cấp, thay thế bằng một cơ cấu mới gọi là Ủy-Ban Đồng-Viện Chính-trị, sau được thay thế bằng danh xưng Ủy-Ban Thông-Tin Đại-chung ở cấp Quốc-Gia và ở cấp Bộ, Tỉnh, Thị.

Cơ cấu mới này có 2 đặc điểm :

1- Tăng cường về nhân sự như tại Trung-Ưong, Thủ-Tướng giữ vai trò Chủ-Tịch, Phó Thủ-Tướng và Phó Chủ-Tịch, Ông Tổng-Trưởng Thông-Tin Tổng Thủ ký và Hội-Viên bao gồm hầu hết các Bộ trong Nội-Các (Slide 3)

Thủ-Tướng còn đặt Ủy-Ban này trực thuộc Hội-Đồng BDM Trung-Ưong do Tổng-Trưởng Chủ-Tọa, gổ y đôn tất cả mọi phương tiện của Chính-Fủ cho công-tác quân yau này.

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Văn-phòng thường trực của Ủy-Ban Quốc-Gia lại do Trung-Tam-Trưởng-Trung-Tam Điều-Hợp ĐĐPT Trung-Đông điều khiển với 3 Ủy-viên Đại-diện cho Bộ Nội-Vụ, Bộ Thông-Tin và Tổng-Quốc Chiến-Tranh, chính-trị. Văn-phòng lại còn gồm có 3 khối chuyên môn do các Nhà của Bộ Thông-Tin đảm trách. (Slide 4)

2.-Diễn đạt tổ chức : Bộ 2 cấp Trung-gian xét không cần-thiết. Cấp Vùng này là Quận-Khu, vì vai trò kiểm tra đôn-đọc đã có Hội-đồng (ĐĐPT) Quận-Khu đảm trách;

Cấp Quận vì chỉ là cấp thừa hành.

Sau đó chấp thuận đề nghị của Bộ Thông-Tin, Thủ-Tướng còn Ban hành lệnh thị điều chỉnh các đơn vị và Thông-Tin Đại-Chung ngày 27.5.70, thành lập thêm tại mỗi Bộ và Cơ-quan tự trị Trung-Đông 1 Ban Tham-Mưu nhẹ và tại mỗi Ủy-Ban/TTĐC ĐĐ Tỉnh Thị 1 Ban Thương-Vụ. (Slide 5 và 6).

### III- TƯ-TƯỚNG CHỈ DẠO

1.-Cần có một hệ-thống Thông-Tin hữu hiệu do sự phối hợp chặt chẽ giữa các cơ-quan Chanh-quyền và các Đoàn thể Nhân dân.

2.-Bộ Thông-Tin giữ vai trò chính về sự phối hợp của tất cả các Bộ trong Chanh-Phủ có trách nhiệm tổ-chức các chiến dịch Thông-Tin cho dân chúng biết rõ các chương trình hoạt-động của Bộ mình và kêu gọi dân chúng tham gia tích cực vào các chương trình đó.

3.-Các cấp chỉ-huy Địa-phương (Tỉnh-Trưởng, Quận-Trưởng, Xã-Trưởng) trực tiếp chỉ đạo chương trình Thông-Tin, không những chấp hành các chiến dịch của Thượng cấp mà còn phải có sáng kiến địa-phương tổ-chức các chiến dịch vận-động dân chúng tham gia các chương trình của Chanh-Phủ đề-ra để phục-vụ dân chúng.

4.-Quản cấp-chính phải tích cực học-tập chính-trị, thông suốt chính-sách và đường lối của Chanh-Phủ qua các cuộc sinh-hoạt, thảo-luận tập thể và giải thích hữu hiệu những chương trình của Chanh-Phủ. Sau đó đem sự học hỏi và hiểu biết phổ-biến đến gia-gia-đình, thân-nhân, láng-lề và xóm-kề xa gần.

5.-Công-tác Thông-Tin phải nhằm giáo-dục quần chúng về quyền lợi và bổn-phận công dân đúng theo Hiến-Pháp, chỉ dẫn kỹ-thuật để đóng bảo-cải tiến tình-trạng xã-hội và kinh-tế địa-phương, trực tiếp yêu trợ việc vận-động quần chúng tham gia phát-triển địa-phương trên mọi lãnh-vực. Các vấn-đề-liên-quan đến phát-triển phải được quang-bà đầy đủ bằng các bản-thông-tin, các buổi họp công-cộng và những biện pháp thích nghi để khuyến khích dân chúng thật sự tham gia tích cực và tạo cơ-hội cho dân chúng đạt nguyện-vọng.

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6.- Toàn thể nhân viên Công quyền đều là Cán-bộ Thông-Tin và phải tích cực hoạt-dộng cho thông-tin vận động quần chúng.

7.- Cán-bộ thông-tin phải được huấn luyện và bổ nhiệm đầy đủ. Phương-tiện thông-tin phải đời đời và thích ứng, bảo trì vận-toàn và sửa chữa kịp thời, tin dụng khéo léo tùy tình hình dân chúng địa-phương. Tài-liệu thông-tin phải được phổ-biến bằng mọi phương-tiện nhanh nhất để giữ thời gian tinh.

#### IV-Nhiệm-Vụ

##### 1)-Của UBQG/TTDC

-Ấn định kế-hoạch Thông-Tin toàn Quốc để thực hiện chính sách và các mục tiêu quốc-gia.

-Yểm trợ và phối-hợp các chương trình kế-hoạch chiến tranh chính-trị.

-Chỉ đạo Tổng-quát, chương trình học tập chính trị cho Quân Cấn Chính và Nhân dân toàn quốc.

- Phối hợp các nỗ lực của Chính Phủ với các nỗ lực của các Hội đoàn nhân dân nhằm tạo khí thế đăy tranh chính trị hữu hiệu chống Cộng-San, xây dựng tinh thần tự lực, tự cường và thực hiện các mục tiêu vĩnh cửu của Quốc Gia.

##### 2)- Của Văn phòng thường trực :

- chấp hành quyết định của UBQG/TTDC

- chuẩn bị và tổ chức các buổi họp của UBQG/TTDC

- Nghiên cứu, soạn thảo và trình lên UBQG/TTDC các biện pháp kế hoạch, tài liệu liên hệ đến công tác Thông-Tin Đại chúng.

- Phổ biến các chương trình, kế hoạch, tài liệu hay chỉ thị của UBQG/TTDC

- Hướng dẫn đôn đốc và giám sát hoạt động của công tác Thông tin đại chúng cấp Phủ, Bộ, Đô-Thành, Tỉnh, Thị xã.

- Nhận đúc kết và trình lên UBQG/TTDC thành quả công tác của các UBQG/TTDC nói trên cùng với những ý kiến, nhận xét, đề nghị hay thỉnh nguyện xin giải quyết.

##### 3)- Của các Ban Tham Muo

- Hướng dẫn tổ chức học tập tại các cơ quan thông thuộc những tài liệu do UBQG/TTDC gửi đến.

- Đôn đốc, giám sát tinh thần học tập.

- Nhận báo cáo, đúc kết trình lên UBQG/TTDC những thành quả công tác học tập của cơ quan mình cùng với những ý kiến, nhận xét, đề nghị, khó khăn xin giải quyết.

- Mở các chiến dịch quảng bá những chương trình của cơ quan đến quần đại quần chúng để giải thích và kêu gọi sự hợp tác tham gia.

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- Soạn thảo tài liệu chuyên môn cần phổ biến hoặc học tập gửi UBQG/TTDC.

4)- Của UBQG/TTDC Đô Tỉnh Thị.

- Thi hành các chỉ thị hay chương trình kế hoạch TTDC của UBQG.
- Nghiên cứu và hoạch thảo chương trình kế hoạch TTDC tại địa phương theo chương trình kế hoạch chung của UBQG.
- Tho biên các tài liệu của UBQG/TTDC, hướng dẫn, theo dõi đôn đốc và kiểm soát tình hình học tập thuộc phạm vi quản hạt.
- Nhân, đúc kết, đánh giá, rút ưu khuyết điểm và báo cáo lên UBQG/TTDC về các thành quả công tác TTDC của địa phương, với những nhận xét, đề nghị, tu chỉnh, xây dựng thưởng phạt hay đề nghị trở ngại cần giải quyết.

5)- Của các Ban Thường Vụ.

- Chấp hành các chỉ thị của UB/TTDC Đô Tỉnh Thị

V.- Phương thức học tập chính trị.

A. Thành phần tham gia học tập :

- toàn thể cán bộ, công chức các ngành, các cấp, kể cả viên chức Xã Ấp và đơn vị NĐTV.
- Sĩ quan, binh sĩ thuộc QLVNCH và các lực lượng bán quân sự như CSQG.

B. Diễn tiến học tập.

- a) công tác học tập được thực hiện làm 2 cấp :
  - cấp 1 dành riêng cho các thuyết trình viên và các cấp chỉ huy để nắm vững suốt vấn đề và đã thông thạo trước khi tổ chức học tập cấp 2.
  - cấp 2 dành cho toàn thể công chức, cán bộ hay quân nhân trong đơn vị.
- b) các buổi học tập phải tổ chức nghiêm chỉnh, có chủ tọa đoàn thuyết trình viên, thư ký đoàn cùng các nghi lễ thông thường như chào cờ, mặc niệm các chiến sĩ, v.v....
- c) Sau mỗi buổi hội thảo phải làm báo cáo ghi rõ thắc mắc do các hội viên nêu ra cùng những thắc mắc không giải đáp được cần phải do Trung-Ương giải đáp.
- d) Mỗi tuần học tập 1 đề tài. Sau 4 tuần học tập các đơn vị hành chính như quận sự tổ chức đại hội tổng kết học tập để gây thêm khí hào hứng học tập và khen thưởng các cá nhân và đơn vị xuất sắc.

C. Báo cáo : các đơn vị và theo đúng định kỳ :

- a)- Sau mỗi buổi học tập hàng tuần
- b) sau đại hội học tập hàng tháng

Báo cáo cần ghi rõ thái độ và phản ứng của các học viên, những thắc mắc và những đề nghị xây dựng cụ thể.

VI.- Soạn thảo tài liệu học tập.

Có 4 loại tài liệu

- 1) Tài liệu xây dựng tư tưởng chính trị, xã hội tư tưởng

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- CS : do Bộ Thông-Tin soạn thảo.
- 2) Tài liệu giải thích những vấn đề thời sự thông thường : do Bộ Thông Tin soạn thảo
  - 3) Tài liệu liên quan đến chính sách và đường lối quốc gia, như vấn đề chiến tranh, hòa bình, thương phế binh, lao động, v.v . . : do Bộ Thông-Tin soạn thảo sau khi thỉnh thị UBQG/TĐC
  - 4) Tài liệu chuyên môn : do Bộ liên hệ soạn thảo

Sau khi soạn xong, mỗi loại tài liệu trên đây đợc gửi đến UBQG/TĐC để dự vào cuộc tuyển chọn li để tài được ưu tiên học tập trong tháng.

VII.- Chương trình Thông Tin Đại-Chúng trong KH/ĐĐT 1970.

A.- chương trình này gồm 2 mục tiêu :

- 1- Động viên toàn dân tích cực hưởng ứng và góp phần với Chính Phủ thực hiện 3 mục tiêu của kế hoạch ĐĐT trong tinh thần cộng đồng hợp tác.
- 2- Phổ biến và giải thích các vấn đề chủ yếu nhất là thông qua nhiều tầm mức quan trọng quyết định của kế hoạch ĐĐT

B)- Chương trình này dựa vào 7 từ khóa chỉ đạo đã nói ở đoạn trên và gồm các trọng tâm công tác sau đây :

- 1) Tổ chức học tập thường xuyên cho công chức, cán bộ các ngành, NĐTV, về các đề tài chính trị, thời sự quan trọng khả dĩ tạo cơ hội cho họ tham gia trực tiếp vào công cuộc đấu tranh chính trị với địch.
- 2) Dạy mạch công tác Thông-Tin điệt, đối diện trong quan chúng dưới các hình thức nói chuyện, bàn đàm, hội thảo, vãng gia, để phổ biến các vấn đề chính trị, thời sự quan trọng và hướng dẫn sinh hoạt cộng đồng, thực thi dân chủ. Các công tác Thông-Tin trực diện này phải đợc đặt vào hàng đầu vì có kết quả và chiều sâu, về phẩm hơn về lượng.
- 3) Xử dụng đến mức tối đa các dụng cụ thông tin hiện hữu phát-triển và vận động nhân dân thực hiện thêm các chương tiện thông tin, để nhờ đó, bành trướng thêm hoạt động của ngành v.v... Phải quan niệm đúng việc xử dụng các dụng cụ thông tin như những phương tiện bổ túc hỗ trợ người cán bộ Thông-tin mà thôi.
- 4) Hoàn bị và kiện toàn hệ thống cơ sở về nhân sự thông tin tại các Ty, Chi, Xã, Ấp, Phường, Khóm.
- 5) Huấn luyện và tu nghiệp nhân viên; cán bộ Thông-Tin từ cấp Ty đến cấp hạ tầng cơ sở về mặt chính trị, kỹ thuật, công tác xử dụng và báo trị đợc cụ này mức .

Tóm lại, trọng tâm công tác năm 1970 là chủ yếu vận động nhân dân tự nguyện kiến tạo nếp sinh hoạt thực hữu về các mặt chính trị, kinh tế, văn hóa, xã hội trong những cộng đồng thôn Ấp, đã đợc thiết lập trong năm qua.

Thực thức giai đoạn I của KH/ĐĐT /1970 vào ngày 31-6-70 tất cả các công tác về Thông-Tin Đại chúng trên toàn quốc đã vượt 90% số ấn định, nhiều Tỉnh đã đạt đợc đến 100%.

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Tuy nhiên, thực tế cho thấy rằng kết quả trên chỉ mới có về chiều rộng hơn chiều sâu, về phân lượng hơn phẩm, nêu qua giai đoạn kế tiếp, bắt đầu từ 1-7-70 đến 31-10-70, theo chỉ thị của Tổng Thông, Chánh-Khu đã đề ra 1 chương trình Thông Tin đại chúng đặc-biệt có 5 đặc điểm như sau :

- 1/- Chương trình Thông tin đại chúng nhằm đạt được mục tiêu căn bản là động viên tinh thần quần chúng, để họ tham gia tích cực công tác BDTT 1970 và các chiến dịch đặc biệt Tự Phòng, Tự Túc Phát Triển tại địa phương và nhằm giáo dục chính trị cho quần chúng để họ thông suốt đường lối của Chính phủ.
- 2/- Trong giai đoạn của kế hoạch đặc biệt 1970 Thông Tin đại chúng sẽ đặt nỗ lực chính vào chương trình Tự túc phát-triển đặc biệt Nhân dân các giới phải được giải thích rõ những lợi ích khi họ tham gia vào các dự án cải thiện kinh tế địa phương nơi họ sinh sống, như các dự án Tự túc phát triển Xã, phát triển Tỉnh và phát triển do Hội đồng Tỉnh, Thị. Họ phải hiểu rõ tầm quan trọng về việc lựa chọn, thiết lập các mục tiêu kinh tế và Xã hội tại địa phương, công việc tìm ra nguồn tài nguyên tương ứng dùng hoàn thành những mục tiêu đó.
- 3/- Giải thích cho dân chúng rõ về lý do phải chịu khổ cực và chính sách "Kinh tế hoạch định" giúp cho họ tin tưởng ở thiên chí và khả năng của Chính phủ luôn luôn thỏa mãn nhu cầu phát triển kinh tế, xã hội của họ.
- 4/- Những buổi hội thảo, tiếp xúc trực diện sẽ được các quân khu, Tỉnh Thị và Xã tổ chức tại địa phương để tạo cơ hội thông báo cho dân chúng rõ những gì đang được thực hiện, những gì đã được dự trù thực hiện, nhằm phục vụ dân chúng và những công tác đó sẽ ảnh hưởng đến đời sống của họ như thế nào.
- 5/- Hoạt động Thông-tin đại chúng không phải là trách nhiệm riêng của Bộ Thông-tin. Trái lại, các giới chức trong Chánh Phủ từ Trưởng ấp đến cấp Trung-Ung, mọi người đều có trách nhiệm Thông-tin đại chúng. Viên chức Hành-chính như quân sự đều phải thông suốt chương trình này và phải được huấn luyện để thực hiện nó.

Dựa vào 5 đặc điểm này UBQG/TPDC ấn định một số công tác thực hiện mà mỗi cấp Trung-Ung, quân khu, Đô Tỉnh Thị, Quận, Xã và Ấp phải đạt cho kỳ được vào cuối giai đoạn, nghĩa là 31-10-70.

Biên tại cấp Phủ, Bộ và cơ quan tự trị, Ban Tham mưu Thông-tin đại chúng liên hệ xác tiếp ngay công tác Thông tin Đại chúng để đến cuối giai đoạn toàn thể công chức, cán bộ tại Trung-Ung thấm nhuần đường lối quốc gia, tin tưởng vào thể tất thắng của VNCH và ý thức về Tự phòng, Tự túc phát-triển và thực thi công tác "thông tin đại chúng. Để đào tạo

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viên chức đảm trách, nhiều khóa huấn luyện đặc biệt sẽ được cấp tốc mở tại Trung-Tâm huấn luyện Cán bộ Quốc Gia Vũng Tàu và nhiều khóa hội thảo cho cấp chỉ huy sẽ được mở ra tại Bộ Thông Tin.

#### VIII.- Kết luận :

Sau phần trình bày trên đây, chúng ta hẳn thấy rõ tầm quan trọng của chương trình Thông-tin đại chúng trong giai đoạn đặc biệt này, quan trọng đến nỗi Tổng Thống phải đặc biệt lưu tâm, xếp vào 1 trong 3 chương trình biên phải thực thi cho kỳ được, đó là Tự phòng, Tự túc phát triển và Thông tin đại chúng, quan trọng đến nỗi Tổng Thống phải động viên toàn lực quốc gia, trước tiên huấn luyện toàn thể công chức, cán bộ, quân nhân để nắm vững, tin tưởng chính nghĩa của chúng ta với quần bá nhân mẽ lòng tin tưởng ấy vào đại chúng ; quan trọng đến nỗi Tổng Thống bắt buộc các cấp chỉ huy, từ Tổng Bộ Trưởng đến Tư lệnh Quân khu Đô, Tỉnh Thị Trưởng, Quận Trưởng, Xã Trưởng và Trưởng Ấp, trực tiếp trách nhiệm và đích thân điếu khiển việc thực thi hiệu quả chương trình Thông-tin đại chúng này.

Dù sao, chúng ta cũng phải nỗ lực để róp phần vào nỗ lực chung, trong tinh thần cộng đồng hợp tác, để đáp lại kỳ vọng của cấp lãnh đạo, đồng thời khai thông các bế tắc mà Quốc Gia ta đang lâm vấp với mong giải quyết được mọi vấn đề cho cá nhân, gia đình và nước nhà ta vươn mình đến một tương lai sáng sủa hơn.

TRUNG TAM LƯU TRỮ QUỐC GIA

## DOCUMENT 7

Source: Phủ Thủ Tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 30445, *Tổ chức các khóa học tập, hội thảo về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970.*

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VIỆT-NAM CỘNG-HÒA  
-o-  
PHỦ THỦ-TƯỚNG  
Số : 367/NB/Th.T/BEPT

T H Ủ - T R Ư Ờ N G   C H Á N H - P H Ủ

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- Chiếu Hiến-Pháp ngày 1 tháng 4 năm 1967,
- Chiếu Sắc-lệnh số 394-TT/SL ngày 1 tháng 9 năm 1969 ấn định thành phần Chánh-Phủ,
- Chiếu Sắc-lệnh số 155-SL/BĐXD ngày 9 tháng 11 năm 1968 và các văn-khiến kế tiếp thành lập Hội-Đồng Bình-Định và Xây-Dựng các cấp.
- Chiếu Sắc-lệnh số 626-a/TT/SL ngày 15 tháng 11 năm 1969 đổi tên Hội-Đồng Bình-Định và Xây-Dựng các cấp lại là Hội-Đồng Bình-Định và Phát-Triển,
- Chiếu Nghị-Định số 1147-a/NĐ/ThT/VP ngày 28 tháng 10 năm 1969 thành lập Ủy-Ban Đồng-Viên Chính-Trị các cấp,
- Chiếu nhu cầu Quốc-Gia,

N G H Ị - Đ Ị N H

ĐIỀU 1.- Nay bãi bỏ Điều 1 Nghị-Định số 1147-a/NĐ/ThT/VP ngày 28.10.1969 và thay thế bằng điều khoản sau đây :

"ĐIỀU 1 (mới).- Nay thành lập :

- Tại Trung-Ưng, một ỦY-BAN THÔNG-TIN ĐẠI-CHỨNG trực thuộc Hội-Đồng Bình-Định và Phát-Triển Trung-Ưng ;
- Tại Địa-Phương, các ỦY-BAN THÔNG-TIN ĐẠI-CHỨNG ĐÔ-Thành, Tỉnh, Thị-Xã trực thuộc các Hội-Đồng Bình-Định và Phát-Triển đồng cấp"

ĐIỀU 2.- Các danh hiệu trên đương nhiên được áp-dụng trong các Điều khoản kế tiếp của Nghị-Định thượng dẫn.  
(Kỳ dự không thay đổi)

ĐIỀU 3.- Phó Thủ-Tướng, các Quốc-Vụ-Khanh, Tổng-Trưởng, Bộ-Trưởng, Thứ-Trưởng, Đốc-Trưởng, Tỉnh-Trưởng và Thị-Trưởng chiếu nhiệm vụ thi hành Nghị-Định này.

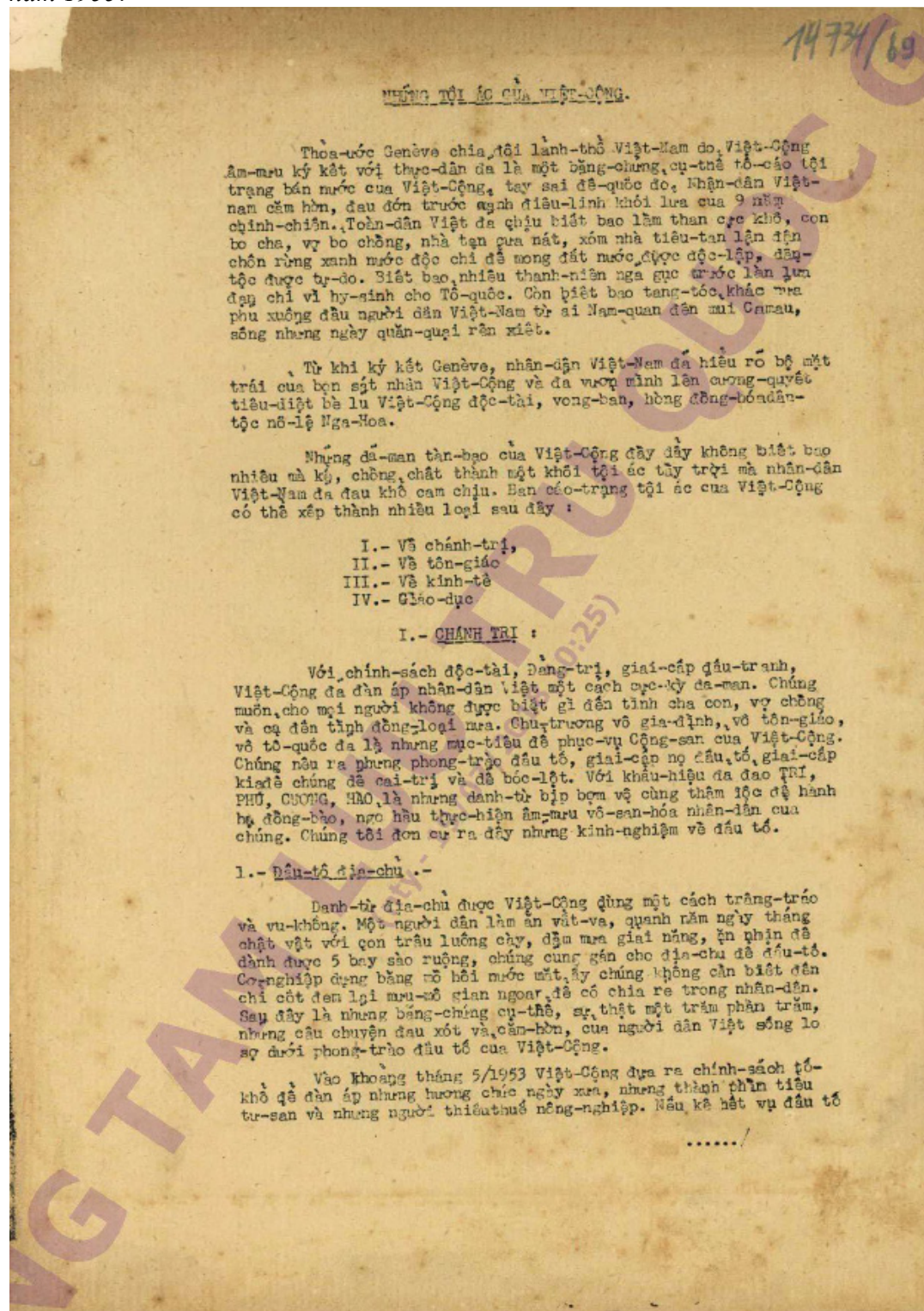
Nghị-Định này sẽ đăng vào Công-Báo Việt-Nam Cộng-Hòa.

PHỦ-BỘN :  
KT. ĐỒNG-LÝ VĂN-PHÒNG  
Phó Đồng-Lý  
LÝ-KIM-HUYỀN (ấn ký)

Saigon, ngày 6 tháng 4 năm 1970  
Ký tên : TRẦN-THIỆN-KHIÊM

## DOCUMENT 8

Source: PTTVNCH 29164, Tài Liệu của Bộ thông Tin v/v Tổ Chức các khóa Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1955.



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vừa nặng vừa nhẹ thì không sách vở nào ghi cho được.

a) Nhẹ nhất như ông Nguyễn-Đình-Tú ở làng Vinh-huyện Tuy-Phước tỉnh Bình-định bị Việt-Cộng đốt râu khoét mắt vào mắt, cạo trọc đầu và phải chịu đựng biết bao chửi rủa tục tĩm khác nhau. Việt-Cộng buộc tội, cho ông Tú trước đây ông làm xa-trưởng, nhưng ngày nay còn tư-tương phong-kiến trái với đường lối cách-mạng vô-sen của chúng.

b)- Bà Lê-thị-Hào ở làng Trung-tin huyện Tuy-phước Bình-định đã bị Việt-Cộng cột hai má tóc treo ngược lên sàn nhà suốt buổi chiều lại còn đánh đập hết sức tàn-nhân vì bà này ít giàu có mà ít tham-gia ủng-hộ kháng-chiến.

c)- Bà Gát-thành-Long tục danh là Thị-Năm, góa chồng một danh thương ở Hai-phòng có áp ở gần Thái-nguyên. Hồi Việt-Cộng cướp chính-quyền năm 1945, bà đã được khen ngợi là địa-chu gương mẫu, nào là bà còn đi bộ đội, giúp đỡ Việt-Minh còn bí-mật, nặc là mua nhiều công phiếu kháng-chiến bán thức cho Việt-Cộng, mẹ đi đầu cho bộ đội v.v... Ấy thế mà phong-trào đấu-tố nội lên bà bị điếu ra, giữa chợ quý để chịu tư hình. Cuối cùng bà đã được Việt-Cộng tra ra cho bằng "cái sau mấy ngày đấu-tố, si và hết sức đa-nạn."

## 2.- Hàm hại những chiến-sĩ có tinh-thần Quốc-gia.-

Giữa năm 1945, trong lúc cao-trào cách-mạng đang lên, toàn-dân đoàn-kết muốn người nạt một thì Việt-Cộng hay Đông-dương Cộng-sen đang bọ rơi các mưu đang trị, Năm được chính-quyền thì việc đầu tiên của bọn Cộng-san là tiêu-diệt, hàm hại các chiến-sĩ quốc-gia. Canh bắt cóc chồm chần, thu-tiêu thường diễn ra hàng ngày tại Hà-nội thu-đô của ngụy-quyền Việt-Cộng. Hàng vạn chiến-sĩ quốc-gia đã bị tàn sát.

Để củng-cố địa vị Việt-Cộng đã không ngại gì trong việc ký kết hiệp-ước sơ bộ với Pháp, (1946) tư đường xâm-lặng cho thực-dận. Hiệp-ước bán nước của Việt-Cộng chỉ có lợi cho đảng cộng-san vì Việt-Cộng cố thể tránh được ảnh-hưởng của quân-đội Trung-hoa Quốc-gia và rana tay tiêu diệt, các đảng-phái quốc-gia. Bỏ ngoài Việt-Cộng luôn luôn bỏ hàng tất cả các đảng-phái và toàn-thể nhân-dân đoàn-kết để tranh-thu độc-lập và hết sức gập sọ, canh cốt nhục tương-tàn. Nhưng bên trong bè lũ Việt-Cộng đã phản-bội dân-tộc, đã có một chủ-mưu là làm suy-yếu lực-lượng hùng-hậu của nhân-dân ngay chính lúc quân xâm-lặng đã kề kề đe dọa, dân-tộc Việt-Nam ở Vinh-yên, Yên-bái, Mong-cái là nhưng năm, mà không-lỡ của hàng chục vạn chiến-sĩ quốc-gia do Việt-Cộng thu-tiêu.

Tại Nam-Việt, là nơi ảnh-hưởng của Việt-Cộng hay còn suy-yếu, và ngụy-quyền của chúng chưa có hậu-thuần đáng kể, bọn Việt-Cộng cũng không chịu dơ-hu-kết và nhất-dịnh tiêu-diệt cho kỳ được các đảng-phái khác. Mấy trăm làng Cao-đài bị tàn sát, hàng vạn dân lành vô tội bị chém giết một cách đa-nạn. Ngoài ra các lãnh-tụ, các đảng-phái bị ám sát rất nhiều, trong số đó có các ông Nguyễn-văn-Sấm, Tạ-thu-Thần và Giáo-chu Huỳnh-phú-Sở.

Cho tới khi chiến-sự bùng nổ, trước kẻ thù chung, các chiến-sĩ quốc-gia dù hàng ngũ tan-tác cũng gia nhập bộ đội để

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chống xâm-lãng, nhưng Việt-cộng vẫn không thể yên và lại kiếm cách thu tiêu cho kỳ được. Tại khắp các nơi, Việt-cộng cho tổ-chức những tòa án đặc-biệt để vu-cáo các chiến-sĩ quốc gia vào các, arọng tội như chống kháng chiến, làm gián-điệp cho Pháp rồi kết-an tử hình. Hàng vạn con người yêu-nước lại bị hãm hại một cách dã man. Họ có thể kể tới một thiên tào đặc-biệt của địa-khu Saigon-cholon đã kết tội tử hình những người có công lao kháng-Chiến kể sau đây :

- LAN - Trưởng-ban tác-chiến sắp được thăng lên chức tiêu đoàn phó tiêu đoàn 306.

- NGUYỄN-VAN-SĨ tức BỬ, Trưởng-ban Trinh-sát số 1 và 2 huấn-luyện-viên địa-hình tiêu đoàn 918.

- NGUYỄN-VAN-CU - Trưởng-ban Trinh-sát 11 tiêu đoàn 3.

Sau khi tuyên án 3 chiến-sĩ trên đã bị hành hình bằng cách mổ ruột trong một khu rừng thưa ở xa, An-thành. Hành-tội vô nhân đạo của Việt-cộng thật là quá sức tương tượng.

3)- Hành-tội dã man, tàn ác và thủ-tiêu người của Việt-cộng -

Hành-động dã man tàn sát, ghê tởm nhất của Việt-cộng là, thủ-tiêu người. Chúng dùng mọi phương pháp, bằng mọi phương-tiện để giết người một cách kín-đáo và tinh-vi.

- Sứ tử anh TRẦN-MINH-LAN, Đại-tội-Trưởng thuộc trung đoàn 318 ở Lạng-sơn Bắc-Việt.

- 11 giờ đêm 10-6-1947 tại làng Đông-Xá quận Cẩm-Giang tỉnh Gia-Lâm, Việt-cộng giết sống 2 cha con một hương chức.

- Chôn sống người. Giết hại cả một gia-dình 6 người nhà bà NGUYỄN-THỊ-TRẦN ở làng Ba-Dã quận Trục-Ninh Hải-châu.

- Chôn sống 40 người, ở một cái hầm dằng sau chùa Cây-Đông.

- Giết người, nổ búng và thủ-tiêu tù binh ngoại quốc.

Chợ Dân-chủ Cộng-hòa đã bị Việt-cộng lợi-dụng làm phương-tiện cung-cấp chế-lộ độc-tài

Bao nhiêu hành-động dã man của Việt-cộng gây ra mà người dân Việt là nạn nhân đều được bọn cộng phi che đậy dưới hình thức dân-chủ. Chẳng hạn muốn bắt buộc một người thợ may phải đóng một số tiền lớn về thuế nông-nghiệp, Việt-cộng cho tổ-chức một cuộc hội-họp các chủ-hiệu may lại để bình-nghị thuế. Tất-nhiên trong số các chủ-hiệu đó sẽ có người của Việt-cộng, hoặc bị Việt-cộng dụ dỗ hay đe dọa nên thường đề-nghị tiền nộp thuế rất nặng. Và Việt-cộng sẽ thu được rất nhiều tiền thuế mà vẫn giữ được hình thức dân-chủ.

Trong văn-tê phát-động giai-cấp đấu-tranh, việc tiêu-diệt địa-chủ bằng cách đấu-tổ ác-môn và có tổ-chức cung-đưa bọn Cộng-san tuyên-truyền rằng công-cuộc đấu-tranh chống địa-chủ là do nhân-dân

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phát-động và xét xử tại các tòa án nhân-dân, còn quyền thì chỉ đứng làm trọng tài để phân-xử các vụ đó một cách hết sức khách-quan.

Để tỏ ra chúng luôn luôn tôn-trọng dân-quyền, bọn Việt-Cộng thường luôn luôn nói đến nhân-dân và câu đầu lưỡi của chúng là "của nhân-dân, vì nhân-dân, cho nhân-dân."

Danh-từ nhân-dân đã được đưa ra làm bình-phong che đậy các tội ác ở địa ngục cộng-san miền Bắc.

Vì vậy hàng vạn người đã bị tốc thúc đi dân công để đắp đường ở biên-giới Hoa-việt hay làm đường xe lửa Hanoi Nam-quan dưới nhiều bài làm việc cho nhân-dân. Việt-Cộng đã đưa ra danh-từ đó để lừa bỉnh về chợ người dân cố sức làm việc để rồi ngày ngày được một nắm cơm gạo đo và chất dần chất mòn vì các bệnh sốt rét nga nước.

Kết quả là những con đường trên đã hoàn-thành và nay đang là đường tải gạo sang cho Trung-Cộng và để cho nhân-dân chết đói như ở Bắc-Việt.

Muốn phá-hoại cơ-sở gia-đình để xây-đựng một xã-hội vô luân-thường đạo-lý, các thanh-niên và nhi-đồng thường được giáo-dục rằng gia-đình không có công ơn gì cao vì cơm gạo là do nhân-dân cấp, người ta chính là, do nhân-dân nuôi vậy nên tích-cực phong-sự nhân-dân và không nộp thuế gia-đình kiếm chắt. Phong-trào thất lý và chôn lại gia-đình đã được bọn Việt-Cộng phát-động một-ma cách đây ít lâu, và kết-qua là một số thanh-niên và nhi-đồng đã bị mất hết tình cảm của con người và biến-thành những phân-tử khát máu tôn thờ chủ-nghĩa tam-vô tật cách mù-quáng.

## II) KINH-TẾ

Để bóc lột nhân-dân, Việt-Cộng đã đặt ra các thứ thuế với nhiều hình-thức khác như sau :

- 1)- Thuế tôn-kho,
- 2)- Thuế nông-nghiệp,
- 3)- Thuế thương-nghiệp,
- 4)- Thuế công-nghiệp,
- 5)- Thuế xuất nhập cảng.

Từ ngày Bắc-Việt lọt vào tay cộng-san người dân đã chịu thêm biết bao nhiêu thứ thuế. Để kỷ-niệm ngày đầu năm dương-lịch 1955, quyền Việt-Cộng đã ban-hành thêm 12 thứ thuế khác nữa. Ngoài ra còn những phong-trào xung-phong ủng-hộ do Cán-bộ Việt-Cộng lãnh-đạo đã khôn khéo rứt xương tủy nhân-dân một cách trắng-trợn, mà nhân-dân không có đủ thóc để đóng góp cho chúng.

Gần đây, Việt-Cộng lại mới lập ra một thứ thuế "y-chí" để đánh riêng vào các sản-phụ.

Thường thường mỗi y-chí của các sản-phụ vào khoảng hai vạn bạc ngàn thì bọn chúng đánh thêm 3% nghĩa là 600 ngàn hàng nữa.

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Những người chưa từng bao giờ chung sống với Việt-Cộng cũng như những người chưa từng biết mặt mũi ngang dọc của các ông Việt-Cộng ta làm sao thì cho rằng đây là một thứ thuế kỳ dị nhất chưa hề thấy có từ xưa đến nay trên lịch-sử loài người. Nhưng nội-tin thứ thuế khác của Việt-Cộng thì thứ thuế "y-phí" kể trên chỉ là một trong những thứ thuế mới lạ mà người dân miền Bắc phải là có ra gánh vác.

Nạn nhân đầu tiên trong những nạn nhân của thứ thuế lãnh vào các san-ohy này là gia-tình ông Vũ-văn-Ty làng Bình-Bang, Từ Sơn, Bắc-Ninh. Vợ ông mới sinh đẻ một đứa con gái là Vũ-thị-Hương ở nhà hộ sinh hàng bột Hà-Đội. Tất cả chi-phí hết 20 ngàn đồng hàng (tiền Việt-Cộng). Ông lại còn phải mất thêm 3% thuế y-phí này nữa nghĩa là thêm 600 đồng. Thật là một thứ thuế tai quái và nhỏ-nhàng. Một đứa trẻ mới ở trong bụng mẹ ra thì có tội lỗi gì mà tính thuế. Biết bao gia-tình phá-san, lụn bại cơ-cục, tội khổ vì Việt-Cộng.

Một thứ thuế khó hiểu nữa là thuế "thu ịch". Đây là một thứ thuế đánh riêng vào các thứ máy móc. Nếu nhà bạn có hiệu đóng giấy chẳng hạn, ngoài số tiền phải nộp thuế môn bài, thuế thương-vụ, thuế xuất nhập khẩu, các loại đã đóng giấy, thuế vang lại vì phải vận chuyển từ địa-phương này sang địa-phương khác, bạn còn phải nộp thêm một thứ thuế khác nữa gọi là thuế "thu ịch".

Chính-sách bóc lột quá ư tàn-nhận của Việt-Cộng đã khiến đại đa số dân-chúng lâm vào tình-trạng đói khổ chung cực. Đi buôn thì cơ vốn lặn lội cũng không đủ để nộp thuế.

Để thực-hiện chính-sách vô-san hóa quân-chúng cho Đảng Mậu-dịch Quốc-doanh đã dùng hết mọi mưu-mô để cạnh tranh với các thương-dân đang vô-san hóa thương-dân.

Một chính-sách dã-man chưa bao giờ có là chính-sách Dân-công, Toàn-thể nhân-dân đem mọi khả-năng sức-lực, để phục-vụ một số người sung-sướng, đó là nhiệm vụ của chúng. Hàng vạn người đã chết một cách thảm đẫm máu, tàn lỵ vì chính-sách dân-công này.

Tên bên nước Hồ-chí-Minh, đã giết bác cơm của đồng-bào miền Bắc, để dâng cho quan thầy cộng-san, làm hàng triệu đồng-bào nghèo-ngoại không có cơm ăn, và cho cơm ấy đem sang cứu giúp bọn tâu phu và cung-cố chính-quyền cho Mao-trạch-Đông.

Gần đây họ Hồ lại tề họp nữa. Lần mới cho thi-hành thuế đột-xuất, một thứ thuế đa-nạn vô ta. Riêng một thứ thuế nông-nghiệp, nhân-dân đã không đủ nộp phải cầm nhà, bán vợ, dự con để nộp thuế cho Việt-Cộng rồi ôm nhau chết đói, vậy mà nay bọn cộng-san lại đánh thêm thứ thuế mới này nữa thì dân lấy thóc đâu ra mà nộp. Thuế đột-xuất qui định rằng ngoài số thuế nông-nghiệp, nông-dân còn phải đóng thêm một thứ thuế nữa gấp đôi thuế nông-nghiệp. Gia đình một nông-dân có 5 mẫu ruộng thì phải nộp 30 thùng thóc thuế đột-xuất nghiệp và ngoài ra còn phải nộp thêm 100 thùng thóc thuế đột-xuất nữa. Thành phần cốt cán của bọn Việt-Cộng là bản-cổ-nông-cung phải là có ra, mà nộp thuế đột-xuất và không được hưởng quyền-lợi ưu-tiên gì cả.

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Đền-chức trong vùng cộng-sản đã nhất-quyết không đóng thuế mới này cho Việt-Cộng, ở vùng Thanh-nghệ-Đĩnh, đồng-bào đã phản-ứng quyết-định và tố cho ủy-ban hành-chính của ngay-quyền cộng-sản biết rõ ý-chí cương-quyết không chịu nộp thuế đột xuất, thuế thuế mà đồng-bào đã mệnh danh là thuế "lật, khổ dân đen", dù chúng muốn dọa dẫm hay đàn-áp đe-man thế nào cũng mặc.

### III) TÔN - GIÁO

Với khẩu-hiệu vô tôn-giáo, Việt-Cộng thực-hành đem mọi mệnh khố để triệt các tín-đồ cùng tu-sĩ các giáo, phái. Giám giữ đánh đập và đưa đi tù đày các linh-mục, tu-sĩ. Giải-tán các nhà thờ, chùa. Cường ép con chiên, tổ cáo các linh-mục. Đốt phá đình chùa.

- Linh-mục Phan, trưởng quản-ly Thanh-Đường Thiên-chiếu-Giáo thuộc làng Vinh-thạnh, tổng Sơn Tường huyện Sơn-hòa, tỉnh Phúc-Yên, không biết Việt-Cộng nghĩ gì mà một hôm ông bị chúng bắt rồi lấy dây dũa trói tì chân đến ngực như cột bánh tét, và giam tại nhà lao Sông-Cầu từ ngày 25-5-45 đến 16-2-46 mới thả ra.

- Mục-sư Trần-trọng-Giáo người tỉnh Quảng-Nam được bổ làm mục-sư Hội-thánh Tin-lành ở làng Thạch-Bàn thuộc quận Tuy Hòa tỉnh Phú-Yên bị Việt-Cộng tình-nghỉ làm gián-điệp cho Mỹ nên sau mục-sư bị đưa đi an-trị.

Đu Vô-Dan, trụ giáis tu-điền ở chùa Long-thành-đ, đã phải quảy gói trên ra đi chỉ vì không đư thóc đóng nộp thuế thu cho Việt-Cộng.

Ngoài ra Việt-Cộng còn kết-tội cho rằng các Linh-mục là người của đế-quốc và phản lại xứ-sơ.

### IV) GIÁO - DỤC

Phải nói ngay là thanh-niên và học-sinh ngoài miền Bắc hiện nay là nạn-nhân của chế-độ giáo-dục Việt-cộng. Một chế-độ giáo-dục độc ác đe-man, chúng lợi dụng phụng-tâm-hồn trong trăn của thanh thiếu-niên để tuyên-truyền chủ-nghĩa cộng-sản, đe-man hơn nữa là chúng coi thanh thiếu nhi như một con vật để thí-nghiệm đầu-cơbình trí. Trong nhà trường chúng ta không còn thấy một chương-trình giáo-dục đầy-đu mưa, các giờ chiếu-trị được chiếm gần hết các giờ khác ngoài ra các học-sinh còn phải tham-gia công-tác như lớp hành, khai hội, không có thì giờ học-hành.

Trong nhà trường chúng luôn luôn tổ-chức sự chia rẽ, phân biệt thành phần để học-sinh thù ghét lẫn nhau, bối lòng tu về rồi nịnh hót với nhà trường thành luôn luôn có nhưng sự v-không.

Các học-sinh còn phải tự khai lý-lịch của mình trước chủ ông trở xuống nhất là sự sinh-hoạt hàng ngày trong gia-đình.

Đặc-biệt nhất là chúng bắt thanh thiếu-niên luôn luôn có ý-trong thờ phụng Nga-Hoa ỹ hiện nay ngoài Bắc chúng đề-động chế-độ giáo-dục cộng-sản ca, nhưng anh-hùng lịch-sơ của đất nước chúng bắt học-sinh phí báng vì lạc hậu không có tính-thần an-bộ

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phụ-vụ Đàng. Hiện nay Việt-Cộng không ghe học-sinh học lịch-sử và địa dư Việt-Nam mà bắt học lịch-sử cũng như đất đai Nga-Sô, Trung-Cộng. Nền giáo-dục mất gốc đó chúng đang thăng tay thí-hành.

Việt-Cộng luôn luôn mang "bánh vạ" để dụ dỗ học-sinh. Chúng báo với học-sinh rồi đây nền giáo-dục sẽ tổ-chức rộng-rai như ở nhiều trường Đại-học, Trung-học và các học-sinh sẽ được du học ngoại-quốc để giúp ích cho xã-hội. Rồi chúng giam cầm sui dục học-sinh trong quân để tị lính cho chúng bỏ dơ học-sinh.

Hơn nữa chúng lợi-dụng thái độ của thanh thiếu nhi để tổ-chức những cuộc liên-hoan nhảy nhót làm cho học-sinh say mê quên biết nhưng sự bóc lột lừa phỉnh của chúng.

Hiện nay nhiều gia-đình trên miền Bắc khổ vì con vì những học-sinh bị chúng nhồi sọ đa tổ giáo sư, sinh-hoạt của gia-đình là cho cái-lộ Việt-Cộng rình mò thành ra cảnh sống rất là điêu-dáng. Thậm chí nhiều học-sinh ăn phải ba cộng-sản còn thăng tay tổ khổ cha mẹ.

Thật là một cảnh thối loạn, không có tôn ti trật-tự, luân-thường đạo lý không còn nhận-tính của con người.

Tại hại đó có phải là ở nền giáo-dục bất nhân bất nghĩa của cộng-sản không ?

#### KẾT - LUẬN

Trên đây là sơ-lược qua những tội ác của Việt-Cộng đã làm sự tàn-nhân với nhân-dân Việt-Nam trong mấy năm khói lửa và hiện nay đồng-bào, miền Bắc, vi-tuyệt đang cị cực hình nhục-aha. Nhưng hành-dộng phản-quốc của Việt-Cộng còn là những tội ác tày đình không thể chối cãi được.

Lịch-sử Việt-Nam dừng lại nơi đây ghi một chấm đen lớn đau thương cho dân-tộc Việt-Nam từ nay và mai mai ngày sau :

1) - Âm-mưu ký-kết thoả-hiệp Genève với thực-dân là văn-bộ bán nước của Việt-Cộng vong bản. Đa mưu-đa chia sẻ đất nước, không đếm xỉa gì đến quyền-lợi của dân-tộc, phản-lại nguyện-vọng của nhân-dân.

2) - Ngaoan-cố vận-dộng tổng-tuyên-cử bịp bợm. Nhân-dân Việt đã biết rõ manh tâm đó, phản-đấu phản-đối, chúng lại dùng mọi cách để vận-dộng ngoại-bang nhúng tay vào nội bộ chúng ta.

3) - Vận-dộng quan-hệ bình-thường để có thêm một phương-tiện xâm-lãng, hòng thôn tính nốt đất đai Việt-Nam dâng cho Nga-Tàu bằng tuyên-truyền. Gián-điệp len lỏi trong nhân-dân để xúi giục đình-công bãi thị. Việt-Cộng đặt ra quan-hệ bình-thường để có mong nắm lấy cái vạ lùa thóc miền Nam dâng cho Tàu-cộng để đổi lấy súng ống và làm cho nhân-dân miền Nam sợ bị đói khổ, như cảnh đau thương của nhân-dân miền Bắc đang quần-quạt đau khổ đói, rách ruột của Việt-Cộng. Hiện-tại ở Bắc biết bao gia-đình đa phải ăn rau má,

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cử chuỗi thây chôn. Việt-cộng đã khôn khéo trưng dụng thức gạo của đồng-bào không ngoài mục-dịch dâng cho Trung-cộng để đổi lấy súng ống, gây chiến-tranh, như đã phản-bội hiệp-ước Genève đánh Lào vừa qua.

là người dân Việt yêu nước, đứng trước mãnh-lực của bọn khát máu của Việt-cộng làm la mồm nuốt nhặng, nuốt miền Nam yêu quý của chúng ta, không lẽ nào ta lại thờ ơ hay lãnh-đạm được.

Chính-sách của Việt-cộng độc-tài, đảng-trị, hành-động của Việt-cộng tàn ác, da-man, đường lối của Việt-Cộng là dẫn dắt dân-tộc vào con đường thoái-hóa nô-lệ.

Toàn-thể nhân-dân và công-chức chúng ta phải mãnh-liệt đứng lên hăng-hái tố cáo mọi quy kố, xác-quyết của Việt-cộng trước thỏi gỏi tự-do để to là dân-tộc Việt-nam luôn luôn chống mọi áp bức để tranh-dấu Độc-lập, bảo vệ tự-do, dân-chu.

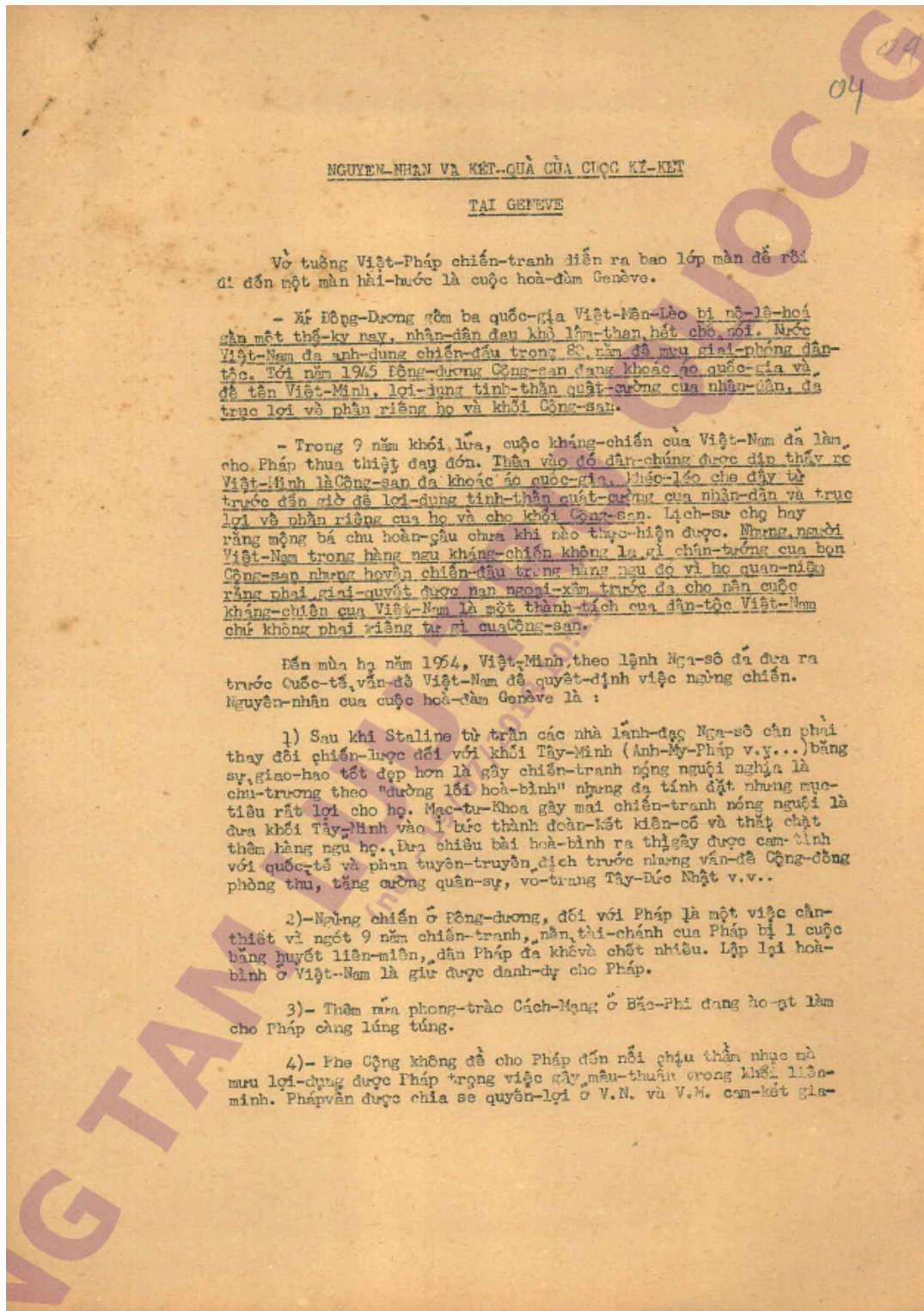
Những tội ác của Việt-cộng đủ dấy dậy, NHÂN-DÂN Việt đau khổ đã nhiều rồi, lãnh-thế của ông cha để lại với bộ nền năm lịch-àr ve-vàng. Tỉnh Nam-Bắc, anh em ruột thịt phải được thống-nhất và độc-lập dưới một chế-độ Tự-do, Dân-chu.

Anh chị em công-chức có bổn-phận phải hăng-hái tham-dự chiến-dịch tổ-cộng, hợp-tác cùng nhân-dân vạch mặt bọn Việt-cộng phản dân-tộc, phản tổ-Quốc làm tay sai cho đế-Quốc do Nga-Tàu.

Tổ-cộng còn là một phương-tiện để củng-cố an-ninh, xây-dựng độc-lập và bảo-vệ tự-do dân-chu mà mỗi người dân Việt yêu nước đều mong muốn ./.

## DOCUMENT 9:

Source: PTTVNCH 29164, *Tài Liệu của Bộ thông Tin v/v Tổ Chức các khóa Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1955.*



nhập L.H.P. để lấy L.H.P. làm bức bình-phong một khi Mỹ dùng tay vào đất Bắc-Việt. Thế là đang ở tình-trạng bi-quan Pháp lại được đứng ở chân trời quang đàng. Nếu lấy chiến-tranh uỷ-bách Pháp qua nhiều ở Đông-dương thì Pháp tất nhiên phải bám riết vào Mỹ và cuộc chiến-tranh ở Đông-dương là chuyện vô định.

5)- Kéo dài chiến-tranh ở Đông-dương, nhân-dân Việt-Nam kiệt-quệ dập một ngày kia sẽ chán-nản và mất tin-tưởng ở các nhà lãnh-đạo Cộng-san. Đó là một mối nguy-hại.

- Tóm lại hoà-hội Genève là cuộc gặp gỡ của 2 phe đối-chiến ở mỗi một. Nó ăn khớp với nhu-cầu của Pháp đang sa lầy trong cuộc chiến-tranh trên bán-đảo Đông-dương. Nó trùng vào lúc chế-độ Cộng-san còn phôi thai trên đất Việt chưa thể kéo dài chiến-tranh hơn nữa, nhất là chế-độ đó đang gặp một nạn đói do thiên tai gây ra và không kém gì nạn đói 1945.

- Pháp ngừng chiến ở Đông-dương tức là bỏ cuộc chống Cộng ở Đông-Nam-Á và đã, theo Anh nga về phía Nga Hoa để tìm mối lợi riêng theo hoàn-cảnh của mình. Mỹ bị cô-lập và tình-trạng đó thúc đẩy Mỹ phải đi sát cánh với các nước Nam-Tr, Tây-Pan-Nha nhiệt-liệt ủng-hộ Nhật-ban, Nam Cao-ly, Đài-loan, Phi-luật-Tân, Nam Việt-Nam v.v... Mỹ đã có thái-độ hăng-hái chống Cộng hạn lực nào hết và hiểu, rằng, việc chống Cộng chính là phải ở nơi ý-chí của ban-xí chứ không phải chỉ cần có vo-lực quân-sự.

Phải chăng đó cũng là lúc khởi đầu của một trong-lai sáng-lạng cho miền nam Việt-Nam. Trong giai-đoạn đầu có thể thoả-hiệp Genève gây nhiều bất lợi cho Việt-Nam nhưng rồi nó đem lại nhiều sự đền bù vì nó càng thúc đẩy các nước trước hiềm-họa cộng-san phải giúp đỡ Việt-Nam sự-đo. Pháp phải giao tra quyền-hành lại cho Chính-phu Quốc-gia và phe Quốc-gia có hoàn-cảnh thuận-tiện để tiến trong khi Việt-Minh đang lúng túng về chính-trị và kinh-tế.

Kết-qua tai hại của thoả-hiệp Genève là chia rẽ đất Việt ra làm hai và dâng Bắc-Việt cho Nga-Hoa. Việt-Minh đã bị trùng đòn của Pháp, vì Trung-cộng nhờ đó đã có lý-do trên bàn đàm-thoại Bắc-Việt. Một mai Pháp chỉ việc trực-tiếp điều-đinh với Trung-cộng mọi vấn-đề kinh-tế dù Việt-Minh muốn hay không muốn.

## DOCUMENT 10

Source: PTTVNCH 29164, Tài Liệu của Bộ thông Tin v/v Tổ Chức các khóa Học Tập Chính Trị năm 1955.

BỘ THÔNG-TIN

TÀI-LIỆU HỌC TẬP

—000—

DỨT KHOÁT TƯ-TUỞNG

I.- ĐẶT VẤN ĐỀ.-

Người ta thường nói : "Tư-tưởng để ra hành động, nghĩa là tư-tưởng như thế nào thì hành động như thế ấy.

Giải đoạn hiện tại đòi hỏi ở chúng ta những hành động mạnh mẽ, dứt khoát trong việc chống Cộng song song với việc bài phong phần để để quyết định sự sinh tồn của dân-tộc và tranh thủ độc-lập thật sự cho đất nước.

Muốn vậy ta phải sắc định lật trường để dứt khoát trong hành động.

Hàng ngũ "Chống Cộng" của chúng ta hiện nay có những căn-bộ quốc gia thuần túy, những người trước đây đã hợp tác với Cộng-Sản mà nay thì họ được chuyển đi tiếp xúc với chính-nghĩa quốc gia, và toàn thể nhân dân Việt-Nam (trong đó cả nhân dân ở ngoài và trong nước), đang sống dưới chế độ độc-tại đảng trị của Cộng-Sản.

Tuy nhiên trong hàng ngũ chúng ta, vẫn còn một thiểu số chưa nhận rõ vấn-đề, nên chủ-trương trung lập.

NGƯỜI

II.- NHỮNG HẠNG/ĐẠO CHỦ TRƯỞNG TRUNG LẬP.-

Hiện nay ta thấy có những hạng người sau đây chủ-trương trung lập :

I/ Hạng người không hiểu công-sản, những người này vì ít được sống với công-sản hay chỉ mới sống với công-sản trong những ngày đầu nên chỉ hiểu công-sản qua chính sách vô văn của chúng. Vì vậy nên họ có một

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ý-niệm rất sai lạc về cộng-sản. Do đó mà gây ra tư-tưởng thiên cộng, nhưng vì sống trong vùng quốc gia nên họ không dám để lộ bộ mặt thiên cộng và giả vờ giữ một thái độ trung-lập.

2/ Trái ngược với hạng người trên, có một số người đã từng biết rõ bộ mặt tàn-ác của cộng-sản hoặc qua những ngày đã sống với cộng-sản, hoặc qua những bằng chứng xác thực mà họ đã thấy nên chán ghét cộng-sản, nhưng vì sợ cộng-sản trả thù nên không dám đứng vào hàng ngũ chống cộng. Do đó mà họ có thái độ trung lập.

Thêm vào hai hạng người trên ta phải kể đến một thiểu số bất mãn hoặc vì địa vị hoặc vì quyền lợi liên hệ với thực dân. Bọn người này tất nhiên là không thích quốc-c gia nhưng đến thời lợi cũng không dám ra sống với cộng-sản, nên giữ thái độ trung lập để che dấu thái-độ bất mãn của họ.

Đối với 3 hạng người này trung lập nghĩa là không chống cộng sản mà cũng không chống quốc-gia, lấy cớ là không muốn dính vào một cuộc chiến-tranh chủ-nghĩa, chiến tranh lý-tưởng.

Thực ra thái-độ trung lập chỉ là bức bình-phong của những kẻ cầu an, bảo mạng, thiếu ý thức đấu tranh đã tạo ra một cách khôn khéo để chôn tránh nhiệm vụ chung, để lo riêng lạc thú gia đình mình mà thôi. Họ không thấy rằng một khi mà tai họa cộng-sản đã bao trùm trên toàn lãnh-thổ Việt-Nam thì chính bản thân họ, vợ con họ, cha mẹ họ cũng bị tàn sát và hãm phúc gia-đình họ cũng bị tai vạ.

Do đó ta thấy tuy sống trong vùng quốc-gia, nhưng họ nhìn cộng cuộc chống cộng với con mắt bàng quang của một người ngoại-quốc không hơn không kém.

Ngoài ra chúng ta còn thấy một số những tay sai của đối-phương được quảng vào hoạt động lén lút trong vùng quốc gia. Bọn này cũng nép sau bức bình phong trung lập để có thể dễ dàng hoạt-động cho đối-phương.

### III.- TRONG THỰC TẾ CÓ THỂ TRUNG LẬP ĐƯỢC KHÔNG ?

Không thể trung lập được, ngay trong 2 cuộc đại-chiến thế giới vừa qua (1914-1918) (1939-1945) một số quốc gia tưởng là có thể trung lập nhưng

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làm muốn, hoàn cảnh chiến tranh đã bắt buộc họ phải có một lập-trường.

Trong đại-chiến thứ nhất tuy gọi là chiến-tranh Đức-Pháp nhưng thực ra đã có đủ các cường-quốc tham-chiến, phe Pháp có : Nga, Anh, Nhật, Ý rồi Mỹ, Thái-lan, Grèce, Portugal, hoặc không tham chiến nhưng công minh tư-tướng với Pháp như : Trung-Hoa, Argentine, Sécou.

Đến như nước Bỉ, vì hoàn cảnh nội bộ nên muốn trung lập, nhưng để đánh vào nước Pháp, quân Đức đã tràn qua nước Bỉ và rút cuộc Bỉ phải tham chiến.

Sau đó đến cuộc đại-chiến thứ 2 cũng có nước trung lập nhưng rồi cuối cùng phải ngã về phe công minh.

Như thế tổ cho chúng ta thấy rằng, dầu muốn hay không một khi nằm trong ảnh-hưởng chiến-tranh, vì quyền lợi của dân-tộc, mọi quốc gia đều phải có một lập-trường dứt khoát.

Sau 2 cuộc đại-chiến I và 2, ta đã thấy thái-độ trung-lập chỉ là i thái-độ chờ thời của một vài nước đó cuối cùng đứng hẳn về một phe.

Hiện nay sau đại-chiến lần thứ 2, thế giới đã chia làm hai phe rõ rệt : cộng-sản độc-tài và Dân-chủ tự do. Cuộc tranh-chấp của thế-giới ngày nay là 1 cuộc tranh chấp về lý-tưởng nó bao trùm khắp 5 châu. Tinh-chất quốc-tê đó đã bắt buộc các quốc-gia hoặc rõ-rệt hoặc ngầm ngầm đã có một lập-trường.

Tuy hiện nay cũng có một khối thứ ba chủ trương trung lập, nhưng chẳng qua chỉ lấy danh nghĩa trung-lập để mưu toan thủ lợi cho mình.

Xét kỹ ta thấy các nước chủ-trương trung-lập cũng đã sẵn một lập-trường, chẳng hạn như Ai-Độ, 1 nước điển-hình của khối chủ-trương trung lập hiện nay và tiếp tục nhận viện-trợ của Mỹ và vẫn không bao giờ ủng hộ công-sản sống chung trên đất An, như vậy thì đã thấy Ai-Độ đứng về phe bên nào rồi.

Cụ thể hơn như Ông Hérru, Thủ-Tướng Ai-Độ, tự xưng là sứ-giã hoà-bình, sau cuộc đi thăm Mạc-tu-Khoa Bắc Kinh, Hồngài, rồi lại ghé Saigon ngừng và nước lại ra chỉ-thị đàn-áp cộng-sản và đặt đảng công-sản ra ngoài pháp luật.

Nhìn về phía cộng-sản ta thấy sau khi là thất bại nặng nề trong chiến tranh cuộc điện ở Hy-Lạp, Cao-

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Ly; Công-sân quốc-tô đã nêu ra khẩu-hiệu "Công-sân quốc-tô đồng sinh tồn" nhưng đó chỉ là một âm-mưu tâu công hoa-bình vào thế-giới tự do.

Vừa đây công-sân lại thất bại trong những cuộc chiến tranh nóng cũng như lạnh nên đã chủ-trương trung lập hóa I số nước để mong chặt bớt vây cánh của thế-giới Tự do.

Nhưng trong mọi bộ thì Công-sân đã từ lâu không dung tha một chính sách trung lập nào. Chính Staline đã nói : Bất cứ thái-độ trung lập nào cũng không tha thứ được ( toute neutralité est intolérable ) cho nên mọi thái-độ trung lập của nội-bộ họ đều bị triệt để thanh trừng.

Kinh-nghiệm ở vùng chúng kiểm soát như: Thanh-nghệ-tĩnh và Bắc-Việt hồi cuối năm 1952, tất cả những người trung-lập lương chúng với chủ-nghĩa Công-sân đều bị ghép vào tội có tư-tướng phản-động và bị hình-thức đầu gọi là "đầu tư-tướng".

Không thể có một ý-chí hoà-bình và tự do tư-tướng thực-sự và bọn khát máu công-sân vì chủ-trương của chúng là bạo giặc cũng tận-diệt những tư-tướng đối-lập. Nhận rõ già tằm đó nên nước Tích-Lan trong hội-nghị Bang-Dung vừa qua đã lịch-liệt phản-đối và đả-đáo công-sân.

Dụng tâm của Công-sân trong vận-đề trung-lập.

Liên-sô đưa ra vận-đề trung-lập hóa, song chỉ nhằm vào những nước nào có lợi cho mình thôi.

Liên-sô trung lập hóa Âu-đô và Nam-Tu, vì sợ 2 nước này chống chấy cùng số ngũ về phe Đứng mình Âu-Mỹ, nên buộc lòng họ đứng một bên.

Trong lúc đó Hội-nghị Tứ-cường ở Genève vừa qua khi Hoa-Kỳ đề-nghị trung lập hóa cả Ba-Lan, Phần-Lan, Luthanic, Lethonic thì Nga-sô lại làm ngược, và trái lại Nga-sô cố đòi trung lập hóa Đức và Nhật cho được vì Nga-sô thừa hiểu rằng Đức và Nhật là những kẻ thù bất cộng đái thiên của họ.

Như vậy ta thấy rõ ràng : Nga-sô đưa ra chính-sách trung lập hóa, không phải vì thiện-chí vì quyền-lợi của họ mà thôi.

Chính-sách của Nga-sô là ru ngủ một số nước vì chiến-thuật giải đoạn, để nuốt I số nước

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khác cho dễ dàng hơn.

Mộng xâm lăng tiến về Baltique và Á-châu, vẫn là cái mộng ngàn năm của Nga-sô không bao giờ bỏ được.

Nhằm về nước nhà ta thấy Việt-cộng cũng đang cố áp dụng một chiến thuật tương-tự.

Vâng lệnh quân xâm-lăng Tàu, Việt-cộng đang ráo riết trung lập hóa nhân dân trong vùng quốc gia để chia rẽ hàng ngũ chống cộng.

Vì sau khi đã dùng mọi mưu mô để gây cùm thù của nhân dân đối với Chính-Phủ-Quốc-Gia, nhưng kết quả lại trái với lòng mong muốn của chúng : Chính-nghĩa-Quốc-gia mỗi ngày một sáng tỏ, lòng nhân dân càng ngày càng hướng về chính-nghĩa.

Nếu tình trạng này kéo dài, Việt-cộng sợ thất bại nặng nề, nên chúng đưa ra chủ-trương trung lập hóa cốt để làm cho một số người, nếu không đứng trong hàng ngũ cộng-sản để chống lại quốc-gia thì cũng không chống lại chúng, nhằm mục đích làm yếu lực-lượng quốc-gia.

Vậy trung lập tức là cố tư tưởng thoả-hiệp, đầu hàng liên-kết với địch để phá hoại quốc-gia và phần lại quyền lợi của dân tộc.

#### TA CÓ THỂ TRUNG-LẬP ĐƯỢC KHÔNG ?

đặt +

Giờ đây sự phân chia về lý-tưởng đã rõ rệt, theo quốc-gia để tranh thủ độc-lập thực sự cho đất nước, tự do và quyền lợi thiết thực cho bản thân hoặc là theo cộng sản để tự mình trong công cùm độc tài đảng-trị và biến mình thành bộ máy thi đua, phục vụ không công cho cộng-sản quốc-tô.

Trong giai đoạn quyết liệt này nhân dân Việt-Nam chỉ còn có 1 trong hai con đường nói trên mà thôi.

Ví dụ các nhà chuyên-môn Bác-sỹ, kỹ-sư, văn-nghệ sĩ, nhân-viên trong các công-sở, các công-tương gia, v... v... mỗi khi ở trong chính thể nào thì phải thi hành đúng chủ-trương chính sách, như vậy tức là làm lợi cho chính thể đó, thì không thể nào nói là trung lập được.

Cán-bộ là rường cột của phong trào, hướng dẫn quần chúng thì tư-tưởng lại càng rất khoáng và phải biệt phần biệt :

T A - B A N - T H Û

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Phân biệt : TA - BẠN - THÙTa là ai ?

Ta là tất cả những người nào có thiên chí đấu tranh cho Độc-lập thực sự của đất nước, cho hạnh phúc chân chính của toàn dân.

Do đó bạn ta là tất cả những người nào những dân tộc nọ trên thế-giới, gián tiếp hoặc trực tiếp ủng hộ nền độc lập chân chính của nhân dân ta, trái lại những kẻ nọ đi ngược lại những nguyện vọng đó đây là kẻ thù của ta.

Cụ thể hiện nay "ta" là tất cả những người dân Việt-Nam có thiên chí "chống cộng" kẻ cả nhân dân trong vùng V.O. chiếm đóng.

Bạn ta tức là nhân dân các nước trong thế giới tự do như Anh, Pháp, Mỹ, Trung-Hoa quốc gia, các nước nhỏ như Thái-Miền, Phi-luật-tân v, v ...

Thù của ta là bọn cộng-sản quốc-tử ở ngoài và bọn V.O. ở trong nước, cũng như bọn thực dân, phong kiến và bè lũ tay sai của chúng.

KẾT - LUẬN

Bã phân biệt : Ai là Ta  
Ai là Bạn  
Ai là Thù

Chúng ta phải dứt khoát lập-trường, căm thù mọi tư tưởng trung lập.

Hễu kẻ nào thích chế-độ C.S. thì hãy dứt khoát ra ngoài vĩ-tuyến 17, mà chung sống với chúng còn đã sống dưới chính thể quốc gia, được hưởng quyền lợi của một công dân, thì phải đứng trong hàng ngũ quốc gia mà chiến đấu, không có quyền đứng trung lập.

Tóm lại trung-lập tức là phản-động, làm hậu thuẫn cho địch, trước địch về dây xích quyền lợi của dân tộc.

Đối với những kẻ cố tâm duy trì thái độ trung lập, chúng ta phải căm thù và tiêu diệt dần dần.

Là người Việt yêu nước chúng ta chỉ có một con đường duy nhất để sống :

DIỆT-CỘNG, TRỪ-PHONG và BÀI-THỰC.

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Source: Phủ Tổng Thống Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa 20354, Tài liệu của Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập Phủ Tổng Thống, Liên Đoàn Công Chức Cách Mạng Quốc Gia hướng dẫn học tập chống cộng năm 1960.

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VIỆT NAM CỘNG HÒA  
TỔNG THỐNG PHỦ  
BAN HƯỚNG DẪN HỌC TẬP

Bộ Trưởng tại Phủ Tổng Thống  
Công Văn Đến  
Ngày 9-7-60  
Số 5514-A

CHƯƠNG TRÌNH HỌC TẬP

- A. Tài liệu: "tại sao chống cộng"
- B. Cấp I (Tại Hội trường từ 16g-17g30)
1. Đại đa số nhân dân thế giới không tán thành cộng sản  
Thứ ba 12-7-1960 Học hội 10 thuyết trình
  2. Tại sao chống cộng  
Thứ ba 19-7-1960 Học hội 11 thuyết trình
  3. Việt nam chống Cộng còn nhiều lý do khác nữa  
Thứ ba 26-7-1960 Học hội 12 thuyết trình
- C. Cấp II (tại cơ quan từ 16g-17g30)
- Thứ năm 14-7-1960 ( Cùng bài với cấp I đã thảo luận  
Thứ năm 21-7-1960 (  
Thứ năm 28-7-1960 (

Saigon, ngày 4 tháng 7 năm 1960  
TL Đồng lý Văn Phòng  
Trưởng Ban Hướng Dẫn Học Tập

NGUYỄN XUÂN LIÊM

Nơi Nhận:

- 14 học hội
- Nguyên tử lực cuộc
- Ban Chuyên Viên Kỹ Thuật
- Ban An Ninh
- Phái Đoàn giao dịch với Ủy Hội Quốc Tế
- Văn Phòng Chi Đoàn

Sao Kính Gửi:

- Ông Đồng lý văn phòng Phủ Tổng Thống
- Ông Tổng Thư Ký Phủ Tổng Thống
- Ông Đồng Lý Văn Phòng Ông Bộ Trưởng tại Phủ Tổng Thống

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TẠI SAO CHỐNG CỘNG?

## A. ĐẠI ĐA SỐ NHÂN DÂN THẾ GIỚI KHÔNG TÁN THÀNH CỘNG SẢN

- I. Đại đa số nhân dân trong cũng như ngoài bức màn sắt không thích Cộng, không theo Cộng

Cộng sản thường có luận điệu "vơ vào mình." Chúng trình bày dân ở trong bức màn sắt như hoàn toàn theo Cộng. Đó là một điều trái với sự thật. Các vụ chống đối của các tầng lớp dân (nông dân, thợ, tư sản, trí thức, sinh viên...) và sự khủng bố đàn áp của Cộng Sản ở trong bức màn sắt là một bằng chứng rõ rệt. Ở ngoài bức màn sắt, chúng làm như tất cả những ai không hoàn toàn tán thành chế độ tư bản đều có cảm tình hay là tán đồng Cộng Sản. Chúng gọi chung những người đó là những người "dân chủ", "tiến bộ" và theo luận điệu của Cộng Sản "dân chủ, tiến bộ" tức là bạn của Cộng Sản. Cũng theo luận điệu "vơ vào" đó cộng sản tuyên truyền rằng những nước trung lập, những người "yêu hòa bình", "chống chiến tranh", "chống vũ khí nguyên tử", "đòi xử dụng nguyên tử lực vào các mục tiêu hòa bình," "chống đế quốc" đều là những bạn của cộng sản và chống Tây phương cả.

Sự thực không phải như vậy.

[Trong bức màn sắt đảng viên cộng sản chỉ là một thiểu số]

Ngay trong các nước bị cộng sản thống trị, Cộng sản cũng chỉ là một thiểu số. Ở Nga, sau hơn 40 năm cộng sản nắm chánh quyền, số đảng viên cộng sản chỉ chưa tới 5% tổng số dân. Nếu quả thật trong các nước cộng sản nhân dân đều hoàn toàn theo cộng, hoàn toàn tán thành đường lối và chủ trương của cộng sản thì các chính quyền ở đó đã không phải luôn luôn dùng những biện pháp độc tài, bung bit đối với nhân dân tí dụ như: những biện pháp kiểm soát tỉ mỉ của công an cộng sản, chính sách bung bit hoàn toàn về thông tin, cấm đoán những tư tưởng và hành động khác với cộng sản.

[Ở ngoài bức màn sắt các đảng cộng sản đều bị các chính đảng khác tẩy chay]

Ở ngoài bức màn sắt đảng cộng sản hoặc bị cấm đoán, hoặc nếu được hoạt động thì cũng chỉ là một đảng nhỏ. Thế giới dân chủ chấp nhận mọi tư tưởng dị đồng, do đó người ta thấy phát hiện nhiều khuynh hướng, chủ trương dưới mọi sắc thái. Các chính đảng khi thì hợp tác với nhau khi thì chống đối, đó là lẽ thường như ta đã thấy trên chính trường các nước dân chủ. Nhưng có một điều mà ta có thể thấy được ở tất cả các nước ở ngoài bức màn sắt là tất cả các chính đảng đều không liên minh với đảng cộng sản. Thời kỳ "mặt trận bình dân" (liên minh một vài chính đảng với đảng cộng sản) đã qua rồi, do kinh nghiệm mà các chính đảng đã rút được trong khi liên minh với cộng sản. Cho nên trong các cuộc bầu cử, đảng cộng sản lần nào cũng bị gạt ra ngoài mọi liên minh chính trị. Như vậy ta có thể nói rằng - trái lại với luận điệu của cộng sản - các chính đảng và đại đa số quần chúng ở ngoài bức màn sắt không những không thân cộng sản mà còn tẩy chay các đảng cộng sản địa phương. Đôi khi một số cử tri cũng bỏ phiếu cho đảng cộng sản nhưng không phải họ là cộng sản. Trong thực tế đó chỉ là vì họ muốn tỏ ra bất đồng ý kiến với chính quyền và họ bỏ phiếu cho cộng sản là để thúc đẩy chính quyền và các chính đảng ủng hộ chính quyền phải sớm thực hiện những yêu sách của họ. Nếu họ đồng ý với cộng sản ở một vài điểm nhỏ nhất, phụ thuộc thì trái lại họ có những mâu thuẫn

sâu sắc căn bản đối với Cộng Sản. Những mâu thuẫn đó chỉ chờ dịp là bộc lộ và những người đó sẽ dễ dàng trở thành chống Cộng một khi biết thêm rõ cộng sản.

II. Nước nào cũng có người chống cộng, kể cả những nước ở trong bức màn sắt.

[Ở ngoài bức màn sắt cộng sản càng ngày càng bị thất bại trong cả cuộc bầu cử tự do]

Ở nước nào chúng ta cũng thấy có những người và tổ chức chống Cộng. Trong những cuộc bầu cử, đảng cộng sản thường bị cô lập, không chính đảng nào liên minh với họ mặc dầu họ kêu gọi. Đó là về các khuynh hướng chính trị. Về thành phần xã hội thì ngay trong giới lao động công nông cũng không tán thành cộng sản và thường chống đối nữa. Ti dụ như trong hai cuộc tuyển cử năm 1956 và 1959 ở Anh Quốc là nước có một giai cấp lao động công nông mạnh mẽ tiên bộ nhất, đảng Cộng sản Anh đã không dành được một ghế nào ở nghị viện.

Ở Áo là nước đã từng bị Nga chiếm đóng từ 1944 và 1956, đảng cộng sản Áo đã liên tiếp bị thất bại trong các cuộc bầu cử: năm 1956 chỉ được 3 ghế trong số 1965 ghế, năm 1959 không được ghế nào.

[Ở trong bức màn sắt cũng có những phong trào chống lại chính quyền, đảng và chủ nghĩa cộng sản]

Ngay trong những nước bị cộng sản thống trị cũng có phong trào chống cộng. Trong thời kỳ đại chiến thứ hai (1939-1945), nhân dân Nga, đặc biệt là ở vùng Ukraine đã nổi lên chống lại chính quyền cộng sản. Ngay trong thời bình cũng có nhiều vụ khởi nghĩa chống cộng ở trong bức màn sắt; năm 1953 nhân dân Bá Linh nổi dậy, năm 1956 nhiều cuộc khởi nghĩa của công nhân và thanh niên đã xảy ra ở Tiệp Khắc, Ba Lan (Poznan), ở Quỳnh Lưu (Bắc Việt) tháng 11 năm 1956 nông dân và dân chài nổi dậy; ở Budapest (Hung-Gia-Lợi) toàn thể nhân dân đã khởi nghĩa dành độc lập đòi tự do.

Trong nội bộ Cộng Sản cũng có những sự chống đối mãnh liệt: bản dự thảo cương lĩnh của Liên đoàn những người Cộng Sản Nam Tư, công bố tại Địa Hội Đảng ở Ljubliana tháng 4 năm 1958 đã công khai xét lại chủ nghĩa Cộng Sản và chỉ trích sự lãnh đạo cùng một số chủ trương then chốt của Cộng Sản. Trong thời kỳ Hung Gia Lợi khởi nghĩa (tháng 10-11 năm 1956) tại nhiều nơi sinh viên và thanh niên Nga đã tỏ ra chống đối lại chính quyền Cộng Sản Nga Sô đàn áp dân Hung và tỏ cảm tình với quân khởi nghĩa Hung Gia Lợi. Những thanh niên đó đã thảo luận về vụ này và phản đối sự can thiệp của quân đội Nga, họ nghe tin tức của các đài phát thanh của thế giới tự do và của phe cách mạng Hung Gia Lợi và đã giám gián những bản tin của phe cách mạng Hung ở ngay các trường học.

Ngoài ra còn bao nhiêu vụ "chống Đảng" mà các nhà cầm quyền Cộng Sản không thể che đậy được và thế giới tự do biết được do các vụ thành trùng đại quy mô tiếp theo.

Phó Tổng Thống Nixon sang thăm Ba Lan cách đây mấy tháng và được nhân dân Ba Lan tiếp đón nồng nhiệt, hơn cả Khrouchev càng chứng tỏ rằng nhân dân

trong các nước Cộng Sản - mặc dầu các luận điệu tuyên truyền xuyên tạc của Cộng Sản - vẫn tin cậy nơi thế giới tự do.

Những biện pháp mà các chính quyền cộng sản đã phải dùng để ngăn cấm các hoạt động chính trị và ngay cả các tư tưởng chính trị khác với Cộng Sản, và những biện pháp Công An gắt gao kiểm soát từng mỗi gia đình, mỗi người, từ trẻ con đến người già, ở bất cứ tầng lớp nào, kể cả tầng lớp công nhân, nông dân cũng là những bằng chứng rằng Cộng Sản không thu phục nổi nhân tâm và chỉ còn biết dùng đến bạo lực để giữ địa vị thống trị mà thôi.

### III. Càng hiểu biết cộng sản lại càng chống Cộng.

[Những nước đã bị Cộng Sản chiếm đóng hoặc cai trị một thời gian đều càng tích cực chống cộng]

Ngay ở Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, sau 1954 ta đã thấy rằng những vùng nào trước kia bị Cộng Sản thống trị, người dân đã thấy rõ chính sách của Cộng Sản thì chính những vùng đó người dân lại chống Cộng mãnh liệt.

Ở Áo và Phần Lan là những nước đã bị quân đội Nga chiếm đóng trong thời kỳ địa chiến thứ 2, trong thời kỳ đó các đảng Cộng Sản Áo, Phần Lan đã được hết sức nâng đỡ, nhưng sau khi quân đội Nga rút về, các đảng Cộng Sản Áo và Phần Lan đã bị thất bại chua cay và ngày càng sút kém. Vài tháng sau khi Nga rút quân về, trong cuộc tổng tuyển cử đảng cộng sản Áo chỉ được có 3 ghế trong số 1965, ba năm sau, đảng Cộng Sản Áo không còn được 1 ghế nào nữa.

Ở tiểu ban Kerala (Ấn Độ), năm 1957 đảng Cộng Sản đã nắm được chính quyền, định dùng nơi đây làm 1 địa điểm kiểu mẫu ngõ hầu phổ trương sự thành công của Cộng Sản thì lại chính ngay tại chỗ đó nhân dân đã trở lại chống Cộng, cho nên chưa hết nhiệm kỳ, Chánh Phủ trung Ương Ấn Độ đã phải chấm dứt chính quyền Cộng Sản ở đây và sau kỳ bầu cử 1959, đảng cộng sản Ấn ở Kerala bị thiếu số.

Ở miền Bắc, chỉ 2 năm sau khi Việt Cộng nắm chính quyền, năm 1956, nhân dân đặc biệt là trí thức và quân nhân đã kháng chiến chống Pháp từ 1945 đến 1954, đã chống lại Cộng Sản, công kích chính sách độc tài, hung bạo, thối nát của Việt Cộng và đòi phát triển dân chủ, bảo đảm cá nhân, (vụ Nhân Văn, vụ Quỳnh Lưu, các vụ chống đối trong giới sinh viên, quân sĩ...)

Khi cuộc chiến tranh Triều Tiên chấm dứt, năm 1954 mặc dầu Cộng Sản cho người đến thuyết phục và đe dọa khủng bố gia đình, hơn 85% tù binh Bắc Hàn đã nhất định ở lại Nam Hàn không chịu trở về miền Bắc sống dưới chính quyền Cộng Sản.

[Các nước trung lập càng ngày càng chống cộng (Miền, Ấn, Căm Bốt, Nam Dương, Cộng Hòa Á Rập)]

Ở Bá Linh trung bình mỗi ngày có 800 người trốn từ khu vực Đông (Cộng Sản) sang khu vực Tây để tìm Tự Do.

Cả những nước theo chủ trương trung lập cũng ngày thêm ngàn Cộng Sản.

Chính phủ Miến điện gồm những chính đảng trong mặt trận chống Phát xít, khuynh hướng xã hội cấp tiến và trung lập cũng ngày càng chống cộng thêm mạnh mẽ.

Chính phủ Ấn độ, sau vụ biên giới Bắc Ấn bị Trung Cộng xâm lăng và Căm bốt gần đây cũng đã phải lên tiếng cảnh cáo Cộng Sản. Chính phủ Nam Dương hiện nay cũng đang phải cảnh cáo Trung Cộng không được can thiệp vào chính sách Nam Dương đối với Hoa Kiều. Nasser gần đây cũng ra lệnh gọi các sinh viên học ở Nga về để cho sang học ở Tây Phương.

Đó là chưa kể bao nhiêu lãnh tụ và lý thuyết gia Cộng Sản đã phải ly khai với Cộng và chống lại Cộng Sản sau nhiều năm cộng tác với chúng. Ti như Henri Lefebvre nguyên chủ bút của báo Cộng Sản Humanite, Milovan Djilas, phó chủ tịch Nam Tư, một nhà lý thuyết gia Cộng Sản nổi tiếng, Imre Nagy, Thủ Tướng Chính Phủ Hung Gia Lợi và là người cầm đầu cuộc khởi nghĩa năm 1956.

Trở lại Việt nam ta thấy những người như thạc sĩ Trần Đức Thảo, khi ở Pháp chưa biết rõ Cộng Sản thì say mê Cộng Sản, khi về nước, nhìn thấy bộ mặt thật của Cộng Sản mới tỉnh ngộ và vì sự tham gia vào nhóm Nhân Văn năm 1956 đã bị Việt Cộng kếp vào tội chống Đảng. Còn bao nhiêu người bị tập kết, dụ dỗ khác nữa và hiện nay đang sống vất vưởng, thất vọng ở miền Bắc mà không sao trốn vào Nam được.

Càng sống với Cộng Sản, càng hiểu biết Cộng Sản thì lại càng chán ghét Cộng Sản, đó là một điều mà trong suốt bao năm qua thực tế đã luôn luôn chứng tỏ.

Tại sao lại như vậy? Chúng ta sẽ nghiên cứu những nguyên do trong phần dưới đây.

## B. TẠI SAO CHỐNG CỘNG?

### IV. Ở tổng cũng như ở ngoài bác màn sắt không ai muốn sống đời sống Cộng Sản.

Khi nghiên cứu những lý do đã khiến người ta chống Cộng, ta sẽ đặc biệt chú trọng đến những lý do thuộc về thực tế. Từ trước đến nay người ta đã thường có thái độ mỉa mai thương hại đối với những kẻ non dại, chỉ biết lý thuyết Cộng Sản trong sách vở tuyên truyền cho chủ nghĩa ấy, không có kinh nghiệm thực tế và cũng không dám đi vào thực tế. Những kẻ đó thường bị huyền hoặc bởi chủ nghĩa Mác Xít và họ hình dung 1 xã hội cộng sản lý tưởng trong đó các vấn đề hiện tại cũng như tương lai đối với quốc gia cũng như đối với từng cá nhân đều được giải quyết êm đẹp. Họ không tìm xem thực tế xác nhận hay phủ nhận lý thuyết Cộng Sản. Thái độ đó là 1 thái độ không tương, 1 thái độ thiết sót có thể, 1 ngày kia đưa họ đến sự thực phũ phàng mà những người ở lại trong vùng cộng sản đã có 1 kinh nghiệm đau đớn.

Chúng ta sẽ không lầm lẫn như họ; chúng ta sẽ bám sát lấy thực tế, không phải thực tế ở riêng 1 nơi nào, trong những điều kiện đặc biệt mà là thực tế đối chiếu thuộc nhiều hoàn cảnh khác biệt và căn cứ trên thực tế đó cố

gắng nhận định đúng đắn về cộng sản. Chúng ta cũng sẽ xét đến phần lý thuyết nhưng chỉ trên bình diện lý thuyết đối chiếu với thực tế chứ không phải lý thuyết xuống như những người không tưởng thường thích đắm chìm vào.

[Người ta chống cộng vì không muốn đời sống cộng sản]

Ta thấy trong thực tế người ta càng có kinh nghiệm Cộng Sản, chán ghét Cộng Sản. Người ta đã phỏng vấn những người chống cộng, những người ly khai, đoạn tuyệt với Cộng Sản. Tất cả những người đó bất luận thuộc giai cấp thành phần nào, khi được hỏi về lý do hành động của họ đều đã tuyên bố là vì họ không muốn đời sống mà họ đã thấy sờ vụng Cộng Sản thống trị, đời sống vật chất, đời sống tinh cảm, đời sống tinh thần.

V. Cộng Sản bóc lột cả người lao động vô sản làm toàn dân phân đối rách thiếu thốn.

Tại nơi nào Cộng Sản chưa nắm quyền thì chúng thường tuyên truyền là sẽ lấy của người giàu chia cho người nghèo, lấy ruộng đất của chủ chia cho nông dân nghèo. Nhưng trong thực tế khi Cộng Sản nắm quyền thì chúng thủ tiêu tư hữu và tập trung tất cả tài sản ở tông tay Đảng, tất cả mọi người trong nước, bất luận giàu nghèo đều biến thành nô lệ của Đảng, làm cho Đảng. Vì Đảng Cộng Sản chiếm tất cả các nguồn lợi, các tài sản của quốc gia, của nhân dân. Chỉ có đảng Cộng Sản là giàu thêm, còn người dân thuộc các tầng lớp giai cấp, không phải chỉ những người tư bản, mà chính ngay những nông dân công nhân các nước bị cộng sản thống trị, đều nghèo xơ xác. Ta hãy xem ngay ở miền Bắc Việt Cộng đã làm những gì cho dân nghèo.

[Cộng sản thủ tiêu tư hữu để độc chiếm toàn bộ tài sản của tư nhân cũng như của quốc gia]

Mới đầu, để lấy lòng dân nghèo, Việt Cộng tuyên truyền tịch thu ruộng đất để chia cho dân nghèo và bỏ tất cả các thứ thuế. Chúng tổ chức dân nghèo, dùng lời dụ dỗ và thủ đoạn ép buộc để dùng những người này đánh đập những người có của, có ruộng ở thôn quê, gây mâu thuẫn và căm thù giữa người nghèo và người khá giả ở nông thôn. Chúng tịch thu ruộng đất và có giao một phần nhỏ cho bản nông cấy cấy đóng thuế cho chúng, còn phần lớn chúng dành làm tài sản của đảng và tổ chức thành nông trường. Những bản nông được giao một ít ruộng tương đương xứ dụng như sở hữu chủ nhưng Việt Cộng không cấp quyền sở hữu và bắt họ đóng thuế nông nghiệp nặng nề hơn thuế cộng với tô trước kia khiến tỵ trung họ không thu huê lợi bằng khi làm thuê hay làm tá điền cho những chủ ruộng cũ. Hơn nữa chính sách độc quyền thu mua lúa và nông phẩm của Đảng cố gắng khiến nông dân buộc lòng phải bán nông phẩm cho Việt Cộng với giá rẻ, có khi chỉ bằng 1/3 hay 1/2 giá tự do. Những bản nông đó đã lơ nghe theo Việt Cộng làm những việc bất nhân bất nghĩa đầu tổ chủ ruộng, cha mẹ (nếu có đất ruộng) để cướp tài sản của những chủ ruộng, nay ở trong thế kẻ "tay lơ nhúng chàm," và dưới sự khủng bố đe dọa của Việt Cộng, đành phải bám lấy Việt Cộng mặc dầu biết rõ chúng.

Không phải chỉ có thế, ít lâu sau, Việt Cộng lại đề ra chính sách "Hợp tác hóa nông nghiệp" theo đó tất cả ruộng đất và tài sản ở nông thôn trước kia giao cho bản nông phải tập trung lại trong hợp tác xã, san bờ ruộng cho mất hết vết tích và các nông dân đều phải làm xã viên hàng ngày



đi làm ruộng theo lệnh của Hợp Tác Xã và được trả lương theo giá biểu của Hợp Tác Xã. Muốn xin nghỉ vì việc gia đình hay đau ốm cũng khó khăn, nghỉ nhiều cũng không được, muốn xin ra khỏi hợp tác xã thì không có công ăn việc làm, muốn đi nơi khác sinh sống bằng nghề khác cũng không xong vì đi khỏi làng là phải có giấy phép. Ai có vẻ chống đối hay bất mãn sẽ bị khép vào tội "phản động" "phá hoại"... Người nông dân như vậy là lại trở lại cái đời kẻ đi làm muons cho chủ nhân ông ới là Đảng Cộng Sản, một ông chủ đất lớn, giàu nhất, keo kiệt, khe khát và quyền thế bằng ngàn vạn lần những chủ ruộng trước đây. Chẳng thế mà theo chính các báo của Việt Cộng xuất bản ở Hà Nội, cả các cán bộ và đảng viên cũng không muốn vào hợp tác xã và tìm đủ cách để tránh.

[Sau đó tha hồ bóc lột lao động, và mọi tầng lớp nhân dân trở thành vô sản]

Ở các thành thị đời sống của lao động cũng cực khổ như vậy. Mới đầu Cộng Sản vuốt ve hứa hẹn với các chủ xưởng, chủ nhà buôn nhưng sau khi xúi dục lao động đấu tranh với chủ để Cộng Sản có cơ bóc lột khủng bố những người này - cũng như cũng đã bóc lột khủng bố chủ ruộng ở nông thôn - Cộng sản sẽ biến các xí nghiệp tư thành quốc doanh và khi đó nhân công sẽ vẫn hoàn công nhân, công nhân cho ông chủ mới là Đảng Cộng Sản, ông chủ giàu nhất, ác nghiệt nhất. Chủ nhân Cộng Sản cấm công nhân quyền đòi tăng lương, cấm đòi giảm giờ làm, cấm đình công, cấm xin nghỉ việc, cấm đổi nghề, đòi xưởng.

Đó là chính sách chung của Cộng sản, từ đảng Cộng Sản Nga từ 1917 cho đến các Đảng Cộng Sản ở Đông Âu, ở Trung Hoa và ở Việt Nam ngày nay.

Trong thực tế người lao động đã biến thành nô lệ của Đảng Cộng Sản và người ta hiểu vì sao trong hững vụ nổi dậy chống Cộng - ở Đông Bá Linh (1953), Tiệp khắc (1956), Ba Lan (1956), Hung Gia Lợi (1956), Quỳnh Lưu (1956) công nhân nông dân đóng vai trò quan trọng. Và cũng vì vậy mà công nhân các nước đã có kinh nghiệm hoặc hiểu biết về Cộng Sản đều không ủng hộ chúng nữa. Mặc dầu chúng vẫn vỗ ngực nhận là "Đảng của gia cấp công nhân." Dưới chế độ Cộng Sản tất cả mọi người bất luận giàu nghèo đều bị cực khổ về vật chất cả chứ không phải riêng ai. Cũng có những công nhân nông dân đầu tiên há dạ thấy kẻ mình không ưa bị Cộng Sản làm cho khổ sở nhục nhã nhưng đến khi họ thấy rằng chính họ cũng bị khốn quẫn hơn bao giờ hết thì lòng căm phẫn đưa họ đến sự tranh đấu chống Cộng.

- VI. Cộng sản chà đạp lên tình cảm con người, làm cho người dân dưới chế độ cộng sản cảm thấy: tình cảm trong gia đình, giữa bạn hữu là một tội.

Con người ai cũng có tình cảm, tình cảm đối với gia đình, với bạn hữu, với những con người khác. Đôi khi vì khốn quẫn quá hoặc vì một lúc điên dại mất không người ta có thể tàn tệ nhưng sau đó thế nào tình cảm con người cũng thức tỉnh lại.

[Cộng sản phá hoại tình gia đình, tình bạn hữu, tình làng xóm]

Cộng sản với mục đích tiêu diệt những liên hệ của con người đối với gia đình, bạn hữu để đặt con người hoàn toàn trong vòng theo túng của Đảng, đã tìm mọi cách diệt tình cảm chính đáng trong con người và khuyến khích sự

căm thù gia cấp, sự chia rẽ gia đình, sự nghi ngờ bạn hữu làm cho người này chống lại người kia, do thám tố cáo lẫn nhau, chúng ở giữa đóng vai trọng tài, cho ai được thì được, bắt ai thua thì phải chịu. Kẻ được rồi ra cũng trở thành nô lệ của chúng vì đã gây căm thù với xung quanh, không còn sống với ai được nữa.

Đó là thù đoạn mà Cộng Sản đã thi hành trong cải cách ruộng đất, trong các cuộc đấu tố thương gia, kỹ nghệ gia, trong các cuộc thanh trừng quân đội, đoàn thể, khiến nhiều kẻ hồi hận và sợ trả thù phải tự tử hoặc lìa bỏ xóm làng, gia đình bạn hữu.

Con người khó có thể giữ được lương tâm dưới chế độ Cộng Sản. Trong thời kỳ ngắn ngủi "Trăm hoa đua nở" báo chí và văn nghệ sĩ miền Bắc đã để lộ cho ta biết những điều mà các người vượt tuyến xác nhận lại cho ta. Ở đây sẽ đưa ra một vài ví dụ: một tờ báo ở miền Bắc đã kể câu chuyện thương tâm dưới đây:

Trong thời kỳ "cải cách ruộng đất" một bà mẹ chồng qui là địa chủ và sắp phải mang ra đấu đã phải xui con dâu: "Nay con có muốn cứu mẹ cũng không được mà lại thêm tội cho con. Vậy con cứ tố mẹ đi, tố hăng vào để con thoát thì còn có người nuôi cháu."

[Cộng sản bắt con đấu tố cha mẹ, vợ chồng đấu tố lẫn nhau, phản thầy phản bạn]

Những chuyện con phải đấu tố cha mẹ, vợ phải tố chồng như chuyện vừa kể đầy rẫy trong vùng Việt Cộng. Áp lực của Cộng Sản bao trùm cả lên đời sống người con, vợ chồng cũng không còn dám bộc lộ tư tưởng với nhau, cha mẹ con cái anh chị em dò xét nhau, nghi ngờ tố cáo nhau. Trong hoạt cảnh "chúng ta gắng nuôi con" của Chu Ngọc, một tác giả ở miền Bắc, hai vợ chồng đã không dám nói thật cho nhau:

"Đến cả em nữa, em là một người trao xương gởi thịt, ấy là thế mà nhiều lúc anh cũng sợ. Anh không dám nói phim hay phim dở... Nói dối cả mình, nói dối cả vợ, nói dối cả Đảng. chỉ ừ ào cho xuôi chiều..."

"Buổi xem phim "chi huy chiến hạm" anh buồn ngủ quá. Một ông bên cạnh cứ ghé vào tai anh: "sao lại ngủ, sao lại ngủ, thái độ xem, phim nước bạn lạ nhỉ?" Anh cầm mũ đi về, ông ấy theo ra thảo luận, và khuyên anh xem cho hết. Về về giữa chừng là có ý chê phim Liên Xô. Anh đành phải quay vào ngồi chờ cho đến hết."

Thi Sĩ Lê Đạt ở Miền Bắc trong bài thơ "nân một vụ tự tử" đã phải kêu lên là Cộng Sản "đem bực công an đặt trong trái tim người."

Trong bản kịch "com mới" của Hoàng Tích Linh, một tác giả cũng ở miền Bắc, người ta thấy một nông dân bị qui oan là phản động bị tất cả mọi người xa lánh và bỏ đói cả đến vị hôn thê và các bạn hữu thân thiết của anh cũng phải giả vờ kết tội anh và phải trốn tránh lén lút khi đến thăm giúp anh.

[Cộng sản làm cho con người mất nhân tính]

Một tí dụ nữa là năm 1956 một giáo sư đại học là Trần Đức Thảo đã hợp tác cùng nhóm Nhân Văn đòi phát triển dân chủ và bảo đảm cá nhân. Các giáo sư đồng nghiệp với Thảo trừ một vài người công kích Thảo, còn tất cả đều hoặc tán thành Thảo, hoặc im lặng. Cho đến đầu năm 1958 Việt Cộng bắt đầu kết tội nhóm Nhân Văn thì theo lệnh của đảng tất cả các đồng nghiệp của Thảo đều lên án gắt gao Thảo và kể tội Thảo, coi Thảo như một kẻ trọng tội ghê tởm. Thôi thì mạnh ai tìm ra những chứng cứ ghê ghớm nhất, tất cả thì nhau và ra tay "mần thịt" người bạn đồng nghiệp đang bị khó khăn của mình. Thật thú vật cũng không đối xử với nhau như vậy!

Nhà thơ Trần Dần ở miền Bắc cũng nói lên sự khao khát của con người ở vùng Cộng Sản muốn được tự do "nặng con và tán vợ."

Cộng sản đã làm cho những con người đến nỗi hành động như súc vật, kém hơn súc vật khi chúng bắt buộc con người chà đạp lên tình cảm, phải làm những việc tí tiện, trái với tình nghĩa, đạo lý, mất cá nhân tính.

Trước khi xét đến những bất mãn do cộng sản gây ra về phương diện tinh thần chúng ta hãy xét đến những tiến triển và sự kiện trong các xã hội hiện đại đã khiến cho lao động trở thành hữu sản và trí thức, do đó lao động cũng có những nhận định và nhu cầu về tinh thần và trí tuệ như những thành phần xã hội có học vấn khác.

- VII. Mặc dầu bức màn sắt bung bit, nhiều tin tức đã lọt ra bức màn sắt, hàng chục triệu người tị nạn đã ra khỏi thế giới cộng sản, làm cho nhân dân trong và ngoài bức màn sắt hiểu rõ, chán ghét và chống đối cộng sản.

Những phát triển về thông tin và trao đổi quốc tế đã khiến cho cộng sản không thể bung bit sự thật được nữa. Không nhiều thì ít những tin tức từ trong vùng cộng sản đã lọt ra ngoài một cách nhanh chóng và thường bằng nhiều ngã khiến quần chúng có đủ phương tiện để nhận định về bộ mặt thực của cộng sản. Nhưng tin tức bên ngoài cũng xuyên qua bức màn sắt để thúc tỉnh nhân dân sống trong chế độ bung bit và tuyên truyền lao khoét tuyên tạc của cộng sản. Một mặt khác dân những vùng bị cộng sản chiếm đóng trong một thời gian (Áo, một vài vùng ở Việt Nam, tiểu bang Kerala, Ấn Độ) đã thấy rõ bộ mặt thật của Cộng Sản. Các quân sĩ cộng sản Nga số đi đánh Đức và chiến các nước Đông Âu đã trông thấy mức sống cao, đời sống tự do ở các nước ấy, bị ảnh hưởng và kể chuyện tai nghe mắt thấy cho đồng bào họ ở Nga. Nhờ vậy mà số người hiểu rõ một mặt thật của cộng sản càng ngày càng đông càng chán ghét cộng sản, càng chống đối cộng sản. Họ nêu ra những lý do thực tế, những kinh nghiệm sống.

- VIII. Giới Lao động dần dần trở thành hữu sản và trí thức làm cho Cộng Sản càng ngày càng mất đường tuyên truyền thâm hút, lợi dụng giới này.

Mức sống của nhân dân và nhất là của giới lao động đã ngày càng được nâng cao. Nhưng nhu cầu thiết yếu về vật chất của con người đã được bảo đảm. Hơn thế nữa, giới lao động đã được hưởng những tiện nghi mà trước đây ngay những người giàu có cũng không được hưởng: máy thu thanh, máy vô tuyến truyền hình, tủ lạnh, máy giặt là những thứ rất thường đối với giới lao động Âu Tây. Về phương tiện giao thông thì nhiều nước thợ thuyền và nông dân đã có thể sắm được xe hơi. Ngay như ở Việt Nam như ta đã thấy

giới lao động ngày nay được hưởng nhiều tiện nghi mà trước đây ngay giới trung lưu cũng không được hưởng (ăn mặc âu phục, đồng hồ, viết máy, xe máy, xe gắn máy, máy may, quạt máy, đèn manchon...) Được cấp ruộng cải cách điền địa, dinh điền khu trù mật, được mua cổ phần các xí nghiệp, được mua nhà ở, nhiều nông dân, công nhân đã trở thành hữu sản. Giới lao động không còn vì đói rách mà bị ảnh hưởng tuyên truyền Cộng Sản.

Đi đôi với sự nâng cao mức sống của giới cần lao đó là sự phát triển học vấn trong giới lao động. Càng ngày số những học sinh sinh viên thuộc thành phần lao động càng tăng. Sự phát triển về học vấn đó gây hai ảnh hưởng:

- Tăng sự hiểu biết trong giới lao động, khiến tuyên truyền bịp bợm và xuyên tạc của Cộng Sản không còn công hiệu như trước nữa. Nehru đã nhận định, trong bài "Quan điểm căn bản" rằng: "sự phát triển giáo dục dưới mọi hình thức là một động lực giải phóng vĩ đại và nhất định sẽ không để tồn tại tình trạng các quyền tự do bị thủ tiêu."
- Nhờ học vấn nhiều con em thuộc thành phần lao động đã dành được những địa vị chỉ huy trong mọi ngành hoạt động về chính trị cũng như về kinh tế. Sự kiện đó đã giúp cho giới lao động hiểu biết đúng đắn các vấn đề đồng thời bảo vệ được những quyền lợi chính đáng của giới lao động trong khuôn khổ những quyền lợi chung của cả quốc gia.

Nói tóm lại là giai cấp lao động đã có đủ điều kiện vật chất và trí tuệ để không bị tuyên truyền hô hào "đấu tranh giai cấp" của Cộng Sản nữa, trái lại họ đã nhận định rằng có thể và cần phải hợp tác với mọi giai tầng khác trong xã hội. Quan điểm của giới lao động không còn khác biệt xấu sắc với quan điểm của các giai tầng khác trong nước nữa, trái với giáo điều của Marx cho rằng mâu thuẫn giữa giai cấp vô sản lao động và giai cấp tư bản chủ nhân ngày càng kịch liệt cho đến lúc phải có cách mệnh thành lập chính quyền vô sản chuyên chế. Giáo điều đó của Karl Marx đã tỏ ra hoàn toàn sai lầm bởi vì ngay ở các nước có kỹ nghệ mạnh là những nơi mà theo Karl Marx giai cấp vô sản lao động sẽ giác ngộ mạnh mẽ nhất và do đó cuộc cách mạng vô sản sẽ bùng nổ trước nhất thì lại chính ngay các nước đó đảng cộng sản bị thất bại chua cay nhất. Tí dụ: những sự thất bại của Cộng Sản ở Anh trong 2 kỳ tuyển cử 1956 và 1959, những sự thụt lùi của Cộng Sản ở Pháp, Ý, Đức, các nước Scandinaves (Bắc Âu). Ở Bắc Mỹ (Gia Nã Đại, Hoa Kỳ) là vùng kỹ nghệ lớn, công nhân đông, mà cộng sản không phát triển được mặc dầu công sản được tự do hoạt động.

- IX. Chủ trương vô sản chuyên chính đã đưa đến độc tài thối nát đến sự dùng bạo lực đàn áp, kết quả không đem lại mong muốn mà còn gây phản ứng mạnh trong nhân dân.

[Chủ trương chuyên chính của Cộng sản đã chà đạp lên các nhân quyền và tạo nên một giai cấp thống trị mới ác độc hơn bao giờ hết]

Cộng sản cũng xác nhận rằng chủ trương của chúng là chính quyền vô sản chuyên chính. Thực tế ở các nước bị Cộng Sản thống trị đã cho ta thấy rõ rằng sự chuyên chính theo kiểu Cộng Sản có thể tàn bạo và tinh vi đến mức độ nào. Cộng Sản thường cải rằng sự chuyên chính đó là cần thiết để thực

hiện cuộc cách mạng vô sản. Trong thực tế ta đã thấy sự chuyên chính đó đưa đến những kết quả gì?

Trước hết sự chuyên chính đó đã vi phạm đến những quyền căn bản của con người khiến con người phải sống tù ngục. Về điểm này chúng ta đã xét trong phần các lý so chống Cộng thuộc phạm vi tình cảm. Nay ta chỉ xét về vấn đề xây dựng xã hội và quốc gia.

Sự chuyên chính đó đã đưa đến độc tài chính trị, đến thù tiêu các quyền chính trị của con người, đến sự cấm đoán các tổ chức và các chính kiến không chịu làm tay sai cho Cộng Sản. Kết quả của những chủ trương đó là những thói nát, phí phạm, trì trệ, bất công, đầy rẫy dưới các chính thể Cộng Sản. Milovan Djilas trong cuốn "giai cấp mới" đã vạch rõ những hậu quả tai hại của các chính quyền cộng sản: chính thể Cộng Sản đã tạo ra một gia cấp mới, giai cấp những lãnh tụ Cộng Sản. Bọn này đã nịnh trên nạt dưới, dựa trên một hệ thống thu lại đơn hèn, vô trách nhiệm và bằng những thủ đoạn khi thì giả dối, khi thì trắng trợn đã tự dành cho họ và cho con cháu, họ hành phe đảng của họ tất cả những quyền lợi về mọi mặt.

[Chuyên chính không có lý do tồn tại]

Cộng sản thường cãi rằng sự chuyên chính là cần thiết để vận dụng các khả năng quốc gia những rõ rệt là ngày nay không còn đứng vững nữa bởi vì ngày nay, với sự tiến bộ của kỹ thuật và việc sử dụng được những năng lực mới như nguyên tử lực và những máy móc tối tân, khả năng của con người đã được nhân lên gấp bội. Tại các nước tiên tiến, người ta đã phải giảm giờ làm việc trong nhiều ngành hoạt động mà không phải giảm tiền lương, sự giải trí cho con người... ngoài những giờ làm việc đã trở thành một vấn đề quan trọng cũng như là vấn đề giáo dục và y tế. Đời sống của quần chúng có thể được cải tiến nhanh chóng và theo một nhịp tiến trước đây không thể ngờ được.

[Bạo lực, đàn áp không cần thiết để tiến bộ]

Có cần gì phải bắt con người sống tập trung như tù khổ sai, sắp hàng đi làm việc ngày đêm, chịu thôi thúc luôn bên mình và sống với đồng lương chết đói nếu cũng những công tác ấy có thể thực hiện bằng những phương tiện dùng nhiều kỹ thuật hơn. Có người nói cách phát triển theo đường lối dân chủ trì chậm - nhưng khi nghĩ đến các sai lầm của kế hoạch Cộng Sản, sự phí phạm nhân lực tài lực trong chế độ ấy, thì những tiến bộ chắc chắn của các nước dân chủ rút cuộc vẫn nhanh chóng hơn. Dù sao chắc chắn lối phát triển của các nước dân chủ làm con người phải chịu ít đau khổ hơn, bởi vì nó không chà đạp lên con người. Đó chẳng phải là giải pháp tốt đẹp hơn ư? Bởi vì tất cả các chính sách và hoạt động của nhà nước phải lấy sự phục vụ con người làm cứu cánh chứ không phải lấy sự sản xuất và hiệu năng làm mục đích.

[và do làm việc, có tiến bộ về khoa học, kỹ thuật làm cho tiến mau]

Do đó bạo lực mà Cộng Sản chủ trương dù cho rằng nó có một công dụng nào đó, cũng không phải là con đường mà người ta nên theo bởi vì nó chà đạp lên hạnh phúc con người và nếu trong quá khứ, - khi những phương tiện của con người còn ít ỏi - Cộng sản có thể ngụy biện rằng cần thiết một phần nào thì ngày nay nó đã mất hết lý do rồi.

Nói về chủ trương bạo lực Cộng Sản, Nehru đã viết;

[Chủ trương bạo lực của cộng sản bị đồng thanh lên án]

"Cộng sản chủ nghĩa đã thất bại, một phần vì tính cách quá cứng rắn của nó, nhưng một phần chính yếu vì nó không đếm xia đến một số nhu cầu thiết yếu của con người. Những người Cộng Sản luôn luôn nhắc nhở đến những mâu thuẫn trong xã hội tư bản và trong sự phân tích đó cũng có phần đúng. Nhưng chúng ta ngày nay càng thấy phát triển những mâu thuẫn ngay trong khung cảnh cứng nhắc của chủ nghĩa Cộng Sản. Chủ trương của Cộng Sản tiêu diệt những tự do cá nhân đã gây ra những phản ứng mạnh mẽ. Quan niệm của Cộng Sản coi thường những yếu tố thuộc về đạo lý và tinh thần cầu đời sống không những đã không đếm xia đến những gì là căn bản của con người mà còn làm cho con người trong xử sự mất hết cả ý niệm và mục thước và giá trị.

"Sự liên hợp bất hạnh giữa chủ nghĩa cộng sản và bạo lực đã khuyến khích những khuynh hướng tệ ác của con người...Thật là một điều đại bất hạnh là Cộng Sản chủ nghĩa ngày nay đã quá bị gắn liền với chủ trương cần thiết dùng bạo lực vì vậy nên lý tưởng mà Cộng Sản đề ra cho nhân loại ngày nay đã phải bị phai nhòa. Những phương tiện mà những người cộng sản dùng đã bôi nhọ những mục tiêu của chủ nghĩa. Đây lại là một trường hợp cho ta thấy rõ ảnh hưởng lớn rộng của những phương tiện và phương pháp sai lầm."

"...vấn đề được đặt ra là làm sao tiêu diệt sự bất bình đẳng trong xã hội để tạo lập một xã hội vô giai cấp, cho tất cả mọi người những cơ hội phát triển đồng đều. Mục tiêu đó có thể đạt được bằng bạo lực hay bằng những phương pháp ôn hòa? Rõ rệt là Cộng Sản đã chủ trương dùng bạo lực. Dù trong thời bình thường, Cộng sản không dùng đến bạo lực, tư tưởng của họ cũng có tính cách bạo lực và không phải họ tìm cách sửa đổi bằng khuyến dụ hay bằng những áp lực ôn hòa trong tinh thần dân chủ, trái lại họ đã chủ trương áp bức, tiêu hủy và tận diệt.

"...Về phần tôi, tôi cho rằng quan niệm hẹp hòi đó trái với tinh thần khoa học, trái với lý trí và văn minh."

- X. Nhiều đảng viên cộng sản cũng đã nhận rõ chủ nghĩa Cộng Sản lạc hậu và chủ trương cùng phương pháp Cộng Sản vô ích và tai hại.

Liên đoàn những người Cộng Sản Nam Tư năm 1958 đã đưa ra một dự thảo cương lĩnh trong đó họ đã công nhận:

1. Ngay trong các nước gọi là tư bản, gia cấp công nhân đã được tham dự điều khiển quốc gia và không còn bị áp bức bóc lột về phương diện kinh tế cũng như chính trị nữa.
2. Giai cấp công nhân có thể hợp tác với các giai cấp khác.
3. Xã hội chủ nghĩa có thể thực hiện được bằng đường lối cải lương, trong chính thể nghị viện chứ không cần phải bằng cách mệnh đồ máu và chính quyền vô sản chuyên chính như Karl Marx chủ trương.

Tất cả những xác nhận đó đã công khai vạch rõ tính cách lỗi thời của chủ nghĩa Cộng Sản và đặt Đảng Cộng Sản Nam Tư lên hàng đầu phe "xét lại" trên thế giới.

Ngoài những lời chỉ trích về các nguyên tắc căn bản trong chủ nghĩa Marx, đảng Cộng Sản Nam Tư cũng công khai lên án lẽ lỗi lãnh đạo độc tài và "các lớn nuốt cá bé" của các đảng Cộng Sản trong phạm vi nội bộ cũng như quốc tế.

**XI. Sự đàn áp các phong trào xét lại đã chứng tỏ Cộng Sản không thể cải tiến được và vẫn dựa vào bạo lực.**

Một số những người Cộng Sản hãy còn quyến luyến với chủ nghĩa Mác trước những sự kiện đó đã đặt câu hỏi: "có thể hiện địa hóa chủ nghĩa Mác được không và, cộng sản có thể không dùng đến bạo lực được không?"

[Sự đàn áp các phong trào xét lại chứng tỏ Cộng Sản không thể cải thiện được]

Đó là nguyên do những vụ "xét lại" mà ta đã được thấy phát hiện ra trong thế giới Cộng Sản, đặc biệt là từ 1953, sau khi Staline chết. Sau khi đại hội lần thứ 20 của đảng Cộng Sản Liên Xô trong đó chính Khroutchev đã lên án chính sách của Staline, người ta đã cho rằng chính Đảng Cộng Sản Liên Xô sẽ khởi đầu những sửa đổi đó trước.

Nhưng chỉ chừng 6 tháng sau, những biến động xảy ra trong thế giới Cộng Sản và nhất là thái độ của những nước Cộng Sản đàn anh là Nga, Trung Cộng đã làm cho người ta thấy rõ rằng Cộng Sản không thể thoát khỏi cái vòng bạo lực được. Thật vậy, tại khắp các nước Cộng Sản Đại Hội lần thứ 20 của Đảng Cộng Sản Liên Xô (tháng 3 năm 1956) đã gây nhiều xúc động trong quần chúng cũng như trong nhiều đảng viên đang bất mãn hay thắc mắc về những khuyết điểm của chủ nghĩa và của lãnh đạo Cộng Sản? Vin vào bài diễn văn của Khroutchev những người đó đã chỉ trích đường lối lãnh đạo của đảng Cộng Sản và đòi sửa chữa những sai lầm. Phong trào đó đã được quần chúng nhiệt tình ủng hộ và biến ngay thành một cuộc vận động rộng lớn có tính cách phản kháng và có nơi chống Cộng nữa: những vụ biểu tình ở Poznan (Balan), ở Tiệp Khắc, vụ "xét lại và hữu khuynh" ở Trung Cộng, vụ Nhân Văn và Quỳnh Lưu ở Bắc Việt, vụ khởi nghĩa Hung Gia Lợi là những vụ điển hình nhất ở trong bắc màn sắt. Ở ngoài bức màn sắt, trước sự công kích của các Đảng Viên Cộng Sản, các lãnh tụ và các đảng cộng sản không biết trả lời ra sao và số đảng viên giác ngộ xin ra khỏi đảng ngày càng tăng.

Nhưng ngay cuối năm 1956, Nga Xô đã dùng vũ lực đàn áp vụ khởi nghĩa Hung Gia Lợi một cách vô cùng tàn bạo, trắng trợn và đã cùng Trung Cộng ra lệnh "chống xét lại." Cộng Sản lại trở về con đường cũ của Staline, con đường lãnh đạo độc tài và giáo điều chủ nghĩa.

Những sự kiện đó cho ta thấy rõ rằng Cộng Sản không thể không dùng bạo lực được và muốn duy trì nền thống trị, chúng vẫn dựa vào giáo điều chuyên chính và bạo lực.

**C. VIỆT NAM CHỐNG CỘNG CÒN VÌ NHỮNG LÝ DO KHÁC NỮA**

XII. Ở Việt Nam, Việt Cộng đã lợi dụng và phân bộ kháng chiến, phá hoại đoàn kết và thống nhất, cản trở miền Nam kiến thiết và khủng bố cướp bóc ám sát tại một vài vùng thôn quê miền Nam.

Rõ rệt nhất là từ sau trận đại chiến thứ hai. Cuộc cướp chính quyền năm 1945 bị Việt Cộng lợi dụng đã làm Việt Nam bị cô lập trên trường quốc tế và làm hại đến mục tiêu giải phóng quốc gia của nhân dân Việt Nam.

[ở Việt Nam cộng sản luôn luôn phân bộ quyền lợi quốc gia và dân tộc]

Sau cuộc đại chiến thứ hai các cường quốc có thuộc địa bị suy yếu, du luận và trào lưu thế giới thuận lợi cho sự giải phóng các dân tộc bị trị. Nhờ đó mà các dân tộc Á Phi như Nam Dương, Diên Điện, Ấn Độ, Mã Lai, Tunisie, Maroc, Syrie, Ai Cập, v.v... dần dần được công nhận độc lập. Ở Việt Nam, phong trào giành độc lập bị Việt Cộng nắm lấy cho nên đã làm mất cảm tình của thế giới tự do và làm thiệt thòi cho cuộc chiến đấu của dân tộc;

[Việt cộng lợi dụng và phân bộ kháng chiến]

1. Cuộc chiến đấu của Việt Nam phải kéo dài đến 9 năm gây bao nhiêu hy sinh và tàn phá, có thể tránh được nếu công cuộc giải phóng đất nước không bị cộng sản phi phối.
2. Để đi đến sự phân chia lãnh thổ, phần nữa miền Bắc bị rơi vào trong bức màn sắt, chịu sự chi phối của Nga Xô và Trung Cộng.
3. Chủ trương gia cấp đấu tranh và những biện pháp khủng bố của Cộng Sản đã làm cho hàng ngũ nhân dân Việt Nam bị chia rẽ bao người quốc gia bị Việt Cộng sát hại trong lúc đáng lẽ phải đại đoàn kết để giành độc lập và kiến quốc.

Từ 1954, sau khi ngưng bắn tại Việt Nam, Việt Cộng cũng không từ bỏ đường lối phân quốc gia dân tộc của họ.

[phá hoại công cuộc kiến quốc, gây trở ngại cho thống nhất]

Đáng lẽ những vấn đề trọng đại phải để toàn dân định đoạt thì ngay sau khi ngưng bắn Việt Cộng đã dùng những biện pháp hết sức cứng rắn để đặt dân tộc Việt Nam trước một sự trạng đã rồi ở miền Bắc: sự đàn áp và tiêu diệt những tổ chức và tư tưởng không phải là Cộng Sản, sự vô sản hóa nhân dân và sự gia nhập trung thành vào hàng ngũ Cộng Sản quốc tế. Con đường đó đã ngày càng đào sâu hố chia rẽ giữa hai miền và đã thủ tiêu quyền quyết định của đồng bào miền Bắc trong việc lựa chọn chính thể cho toàn quốc sau này.

XIII. Việt cộng, tay sai của ngoại bang. Nga Xô và Trung Cộng đã hại dân còn phân quốc nữa.

Như ta đã thấy ở trên, Việt Cộng đã luôn luôn phục vụ Cộng Sản quốc tế và do đó đã phân bộ quyền lợi quốc gia và dân tộc.



Việt cộng luôn luôn đề cao Nga Sô và Trung Cộng một cách trơ trẽn, cả đến những hành động tàn bạo của Cộng Sản quốc tế như những vụ Hung Gia Lợi, Tây Tạng, Việt Cộng cũng cố bào chữa cho Nga Sô và Trung Cộng. Các báo Cộng Sản ở các nước khác viết như thế nào thì báo chí của Việt Cộng ở Bắc Việt cũng phụ họa như thế. Trước 1956 Việt Cộng phụ họa với Cộng Sản quốc tế thóa mạ Tito là "tay sai, chó săn của đế quốc Mỹ," đến cuối 1956, Khroustchev và Boulganine sang Nam Tư cầu hòa lại với Tito thì Việt Cộng bèn lập tức đổi giọng ca ngợi Tito, mời các đoàn Nam Tư sang chơi. Đến 1958, chủ nghĩa xét lại của Nam Tư bị Nga Sô và Trung Cộng công kích thì Việt Cộng lại đổi giọng coi Nam Tư như thù địch ngay. Về vụ Hung Gia Lợi, khi Nga Sô đàn áp cuộc cách mệnh tháng 10 năm 1956 ở Hung thì Việt Cộng đổi giọng ngay, thóa mạ Thủ Tướng Imre Nagy là phản cách mệnh mặc dầu trước đây có mấy ngày chúng còn tâng bốc Imre Nagy. Đường lối kéo bè kéo đảng và gây căm thù quốc tế như vậy không có lợi cho sự hiểu biết quốc tế cũng như cho quyền lợi của nhân dân Việt Nam.

Thậm chí cả trong chánh sách của Chính Phủ Nam Dương đối với Huê Kiêu Việt Cộng cũng theo lệnh của Trung Cộng đã phá chính phủ Nam Dương và bênh vực mù quáng lập trường của Trung Cộng, gây mâu thuẫn với các nước láng giềng ở Đông Nam Á.

Đối với Việt Cộng không những đã thi hành mù quáng những biện pháp của Trung Cộng và Nga Sô, còn bắt nhân dân phải bắt chước Nga Sô và Trung Cộng trong đời sống riêng tư hàng ngày: tỉ dụ như bắt nhân dân "học tập tác phong Mao chủ tịch," phục sức theo kiểu Trung Cộng, từ bộ 'áo đại quan' đến lối thiếu nữ tết tóc đuôi sam. Về danh từ, Việt Cộng cũng bắt dùng những tiếng Trung Cộng, mặc dầu đã có sẵn những tiếng Việt cùng một nghĩa.

Những biện pháp đó sẽ làm mất dần dần tộc tính và biến những thể hệ hậu sinh ở miền Bắc thành những kẻ mất rễ.

Trong địa hạt văn hóa bài thơ lố bịch về Staline<sup>[1]</sup> của Tố Hữu, Thứ Trưởng Bộ Văn Hóa Việt Cộng, là một bằng chứng điển hình về tư tưởng nô lệ của Việt Cộng. Tư tưởng cho rằng cái gì của Cộng Sản cũng là nhứt, cái gì cũng là do Cộng Sản phát minh ra cả, đã đưa đến giáo dục một chiều và làm con người ngày thêm nghèo nàn về tinh thần, đồng thời cản trở sự hiểu biết và tình hữu nghị giữa các dân tộc trên thế giới.

**XIV.** Ở Miền Nam Việt Cộng đã cản trở phá hoại mọi công cuộc kiến thiết quốc gia, cải tiến dân sinh và khủng bố những đồng bào không chịu theo chúng.

Để che đậy những tội ác của chúng ở miền Bắc và để lũng đoạn miền Nam bằng cách bản cứng hóa nhân dân, ở miền Nam, Việt Cộng, từ sau hiệp định Geneve, đã luôn luôn tìm cách cản trở phá hoại mọi công cuộc kiến thiết và cải tiến dân sinh của ta.

Như Markos ở Ki Lạp trước đây, Việt Cộng đã mang một số đồng bào nam ra Bắc để làm con tin cho chúng. Những đồng bào đó, gọi là "đồng bào tập kết" gồm đủ mọi thành phần và mọi tuổi tác, cho đến nay vẫn chưa được trở về miền nam ngoại trừ một số ít người liều trốn thoát khỏi miền Bắc.

Trước hết, chúng đã cấu kết với thực dân Pháp và võ trang phong kiến để duy trì tình trạng bị trị và hỗn loạn, chúng từng tuyên bố phản đối việc Việt Nam Cộng Hòa yêu cầu quân đội viễn chinh Pháp rút khỏi lãnh thổ. Chúng đã ủng hộ các lực lượng võ trang: Bình Xuyên và giáo phái.

Sau khi Pháp phải rút quân về các hành động giáo phái võ trang bị thất bại, Việt Cộng đã thu thập các tàn quân phiến loạn để tiếp tục quấy rối miền Nam. Trong công cuộc này Việt Cộng đã không những sử dụng những cán bộ nằm vùng còn cho cán bộ lên lút từ Bắc vào Nam.

Chúng đã phá hoại những chính sách kiến quốc và cải tiến dân sinh của ta như dinh điền, cải cách điền địa, khu trừ mật và các đường giao thông, các máy xáng, máy cày v.v... Những hành động phá hoại triệt để và bất chấp quyền lợi của nhân dân đã khiến cho nhân dân miền Nam ngày càng thấy rõ bộ mặt thật của Việt Cộng và chán ghét chúng.

Thất bại về chính trị, chúng bèn chuyển sang khủng bố. Chúng quay ra cướp bóc đe dọa để thâu tiền thâu lúa và khủng bố ám sát nhân viên chánh quyền xã ấp và những thường dân không chịu theo chúng. Chúng giết cả phụ nữ, thanh niên, ông già bà lão. Chúng đốt phá bừa bãi, cả trường học, chợ, nhà thờ (La Mã, Khánh Bình Đông) nhà thương (như tại cù Bền Sắn).

Chúng làm như vậy để buộc Việt Nam Cộng Hòa phải duy trì những lực lượng quân sự an ninh quan trọng phải chi tiêu nhiều ngân khoản dành vào các công cuộc về quân sự và an ninh thiết thời cho các ngân khoản dành vào các công cuộc kinh tế và xã hội khác.

#### D. KẾT LUẬN

Cũng như các dân tộc tự do trên thế giới, chúng ta chống Cộng bởi vì đời sống dưới chế độ Cộng Sản là một địa ngục, xét cả về các phương diện vật chất, tình cảm, tinh thần và lý trí. Dưới chính thể Cộng Sản lao động công nông, công thương gia, sinh viên, học sinh, trí thức, nam phụ lão ấu, tất cả - chi từ bọn lãnh tụ Cộng Sản - đều bị khổ sở về vật chất cũng như tinh thần.

Nhân dân Việt Nam thuộc một dân tộc trọng tình nghĩa và đầy lòng nhân đạo không thể nào tán thành một chế độ đã tổ chức đấu tố giữa cả vợ chồng, cha con, bè bạn, đã sát hại những người vô tội. Tại Bắc phần hàng chục vạn người đã bị đấu tố, cầm tù, hoặc giết hại.

Tại Nga Sô, số người bị hành quyết đã lên đến 15 triệu gồm đủ các tầng lớp: những người bị qui là "địa chủ" và "phú nông" là 4 triệu rưỡi; những người bị qui là "phản động" lên đến 8 triệu, gồm phần lớn các thanh niên thôn quê, sinh viên, học sinh, trí thức đòi hỏi tự do dân chủ, thất vọng vì thấy sự trái ngược với sự tuyên truyền Cộng Sản; công nhân nông dân bị khép vào tội "phá hoại" và khoảng 2 triệu rưỡi. Ngoài ra, con số những người bị chết đói vì những biện pháp kinh tế và chính sách bóc lột của Trung Cộng lên tới 10 triệu, gồm có gia đình nông dân, tiểu công, tiểu thương sau các vụ trưng thu và bó buộc gia nhập các "hợp tác xã" theo kiểu Cộng Sản.

"Bánh xe lịch sử" đã không đi vào con đường căm thù, tàn bạo bóc lột, và trái lại đang đi vào con đường giải phóng con người khỏi đói rách sợ hãi trong sự hòa hợp xã hội và dưới những chính thể dân chủ, nhân bản. Đó là con đường tương lai.

Ý thức được sự chuyển mình của lịch sử và giúp quần chúng sớm nhận định được sự diễn biến đó là nhiệm vụ của mỗi người chúng ta trong công cuộc chống Cộng và xây dựng một ngày mai xứng đáng. Muốn làm tròn nhiệm vụ đó chúng ta cần phải theo sát những diễn biến về sự kiện cũng như về tư tưởng trên thế giới ngõ hầu có một nhận định đúng đắn về toàn diện. Về phương diện tư tưởng chúng ta phải gạt bỏ những tư tưởng lạc hậu thoái hóa của dĩ vãng và chuẩn bị trở thành con người mới xứng đáng với thời đại mới, thời đại của những con người đã được giải phóng khỏi những bó buộc về vật chất và tinh thần, trong sự hòa hợp xã hội và dưới một chính thể dân chủ, nhân bản.

[Dân chủ nhân bản là con đường tương lai]

Con đường của Việt Nam cũng theo hướng tiến bộ ấy. Nhưng hoàn cảnh thực tế Việt Nam đặt cho Việt Nam một đường lối phát triển thích hợp với thực trạng ở các nước Á Phi cùng chung một vận mệnh, và thích hợp với thực trạng đặc biệt của Việt Nam; một nước kém mở mang, và ra khỏi ách thực dân thống trị, chưa gột rửa hết tàn tích Thực Phong, lãnh thổ bị chia hai và ở sát vùng Cộng Sản, bị Cộng Sản phá hoại nội bộ và đe dọa xâm lăng.

Vì vậy, một mặt Việt Nam phải bài Phong, đã Thực, diệt Cộng, để diệt trừ các nguyên nhân cản trở sự tiến mau; mặt khác Việt Nam phải tìm những phương pháp Cộng Đồng để đồng tiến trong sự tôn trọng nhân vị, ngõ hầu xây dựng một quốc gia dân chủ tự do và giàu mạnh.

[Cũng theo hướng đó, con đường của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa là con đường nhân vị, cộng đồng, đồng tiến để xây dựng một quốc gia dân chủ, tự do và giàu mạnh]

[END OF DOCUMENT 11]

Source: Phủ Tổng Thống Đệ Nhất Cộng Hòa 20353, *Tài Liệu v/v học tập chính trị 'Chủ Nghĩa Duy Linh' năm 1960.*

[BEGINNING OF DOCUMENT 12]

#### ĐỊNH NGHĨA SƠ LƯỢC VỀ DUY LINH

Duy linh là gì?

Duy là chi có. Ví dụ:

- a. Đức Thích Ca đã nói: "Thiên thượng, địa hạ, duy ngã độc tôn" nghĩa là trên trời, dưới đất, chi có ta là quy nhất.
- b. "Khi ấy mọi người đều ngủ say, duy tôi còn thức."

Duy còn có nghĩa là: thiên về, như Duy Tâm, Duy Vật

Linh là linh hồn hay Tâm Linh.

Vậy Duy Linh là một học thuyết thiên về linh hồn, quan niệm con người là một thực thể (realite materielle) gồm 2 phần: phần vật chất hay thể xác và phần tinh thần hay linh hồn. Trong 2 phần đó thì phần tinh thần chủ yếu hơn và linh diệu hơn vì có bản tính lý trí khiến con người vượt lên trên muôn loài "nhân sự vạn vật chi linh." Vì thế, thuyết Duy Linh chủ trương nhận xét về con người để biết nhu cầu của con người về vật chất cũng như về tinh thần. Còn nhân vị chủ trương phát triển các chu cầu đó, nghĩa là con người chỉ có hạnh phúc nếu:

- Giá trị và phẩm giá của con người được tôn trọng
- Quyền lợi của con người được bảo đảm và thỏa mãn hoàn toàn.

Nói một cách khác, Duy Linh chỉ trạng thái tĩnh (Passif), còn nhân vị chỉ trạng thái động (Actif).

Duy Linh ví như phần lý thuyết trong việc cấu tạo một chiếc phi cơ. Dụ trên nguyên tắc về trọng lượng (loi de la pesanteur) để tạo ra sức gió làm cơ phi cơ nhẹ hơn khôn gkhis và do đó bay lên được.

Còn nhân vị, vì như phần dụng cụ và vật liệu cấu tạo nên chiếc phi cơ (như sắt, nhôm, sắng, nhót, v.v...).

Về chính trị, chủ nghĩa nhân vị được xây dựng trên hệ thống học thuyết Duy Linh cũng như chủ nghĩa Cộng Sản được xây dựng trên lý thuyết Duy Vật.

Theo học thuyết, Duy Linh, thể xác và linh hồn, có liên quan mật thiết với nhau, hỗ tương lẫn nhau, vậy con người phải phát triển đều hòa 2 yếu tố đó để tiến tới cứu cánh tối cao: Chân, Thiện, Mỹ.

Nói tóm lại, theo học thuyết Duy Linh, con người chỉ có hạnh phúc khi nòa chu cầu của 2 phần Thể Xác và Linh Hồn được thỏa mãn hoàn toàn, nghĩa là:

- Về vật chất, con người phải được cơm no, áo ấm (có công ăn việc làm, gây được tu hữu);
- Về tinh thần, con người phải được tự do phát triển về mọi mặt (tín ngưỡng, tư tưởng, văn hóa, giáo dục, v.v...).

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 DUY LINH LÀ GÌ?

### I. MỞ ĐẦU

Từ thuở trung cổ trở về đây, ta thấy mỗi chế độ, chánh trị, xã hội, đều dựng nên bằng một chủ nghĩa, mà mỗi chủ nghĩa đều dựa trên lý thuyết căn bản, khi thể hiện rõ rệt, khi lại tiềm tàng.

Vào thời phong kiến, chủ nghĩa quốc gia quân chủ chuyên chế đã dựa trên thuyết "Thiên Mạng" mà cho các vị vua chúa thay Trời trị dân. Kế đến, để giải phóng con người khỏi sự chuyên chế áp lực của các vị hôn quan, thuyết "tự do cá nhân" đã làm công cốt cho cuộc cách mạng Pháp xây dựng chủ nghĩa dân chủ tư bản tự do. Và cách đây, hơn thế kỷ, chủ nghĩa cộng sản đã dấy và thuyết DUY VẬT để thúc đẩy con người vào cuộc tranh sát lẫn nhau để thực hiện một thiên đường hạnh phúc không bao giờ có.

Gần đây hơn, trong lúc nhơn loại bị các chủ nghĩa chà đạp lên nhơn phẩm con người, thì các triết gia Đông Tây đã tìm ra được thuyết DUY LINH dựng trên chủ nghĩa nhân vị để đặt con người trở lại địa vị thiên liêng cao quý của nó.

### II. NHỮNG THUYẾT THỊNH HÀNH NHỨT

Những thuyết thịnh hành nhứt trong nhân loại từ trước đến nay là DUY TÂM và DUY VẬT, nhứt là thuyết DUY VẬT đã và đang làm cho nhơn loại điêu linh, làm cho nhân vị con người bị tổn thương, sút mẻ.

#### A. DUY TÂM LÀ GÌ? - Duy tâm (idealism) chủ trương tinh thần là nguồn gốc vạn vật.

Theo các triết gia kim cổ, thì DUY TÂM là một triết lý qui mọi sự hữu về ý niệm hoặc tư tưởng, nghĩa là một vật mà ta nhận thấy trước mắt ta hay ta biết được là do trí khôn ta tưởng tượng và hình dung ra (Esse ét percipi). Vạn vật không gì khác hơn là tư duy của ta. Như vậy, vật chất không có thật mà chỉ có hình dung của nó, do trí khôn và tư tưởng con người nghĩ ra, và không ở ngoài trí khôn con người. Thuyết ấy quyết định: vật chất là sản phẩm của tinh thần. Chẳng hạn, như ta nhận biết cái bàn, thì không phải do cái bàn bằng cây vắn nó hiện trước mắt ta mà ta biết, sở dĩ ta biết được cái bàn là do ta đã có trước cái ý niệm về cái bàn và trí khôn ta hình dung ra cái bàn để áp dụng vào bất cứ cái bàn nào của ta thấy.

Áp dụng vào con người, thuyết DUY TÂM cũng cho rằng con người chỉ là vật thể, do trí khôn tư tưởng ra mà thôi chứ không có thật. Bởi thế, thuyết DUY TÂM rất khinh rẻ giá trị thể xác con người, nên ít chú trọng đến đời sống thực tế của con người trần gian.

Theo thuyết DUY TÂM, vật chất là hạ cấp mà tinh thần là thượng đẳng, nên vật chất không ảnh hưởng được đến tinh thần. Nếu trí khôn có hiểu được sự vật bên ngoài, đó là vì sự vật ấy ảnh hưởng đến trí khôn, mà có ảnh hưởng đến trí khôn là vì sự vật bên ngoài cũng thuộc cấp thiêng liêng siêu hình. Vậy vạn vật đều là siêu hình chứ không phải hữu hình như ta tưởng.

## PHÊ BÌNH

Nếu nói ta biết được sự vật như cái bàn chẳng hạn, là do hình dung của trí khôn ta, thì thử hỏi tại sao nhiều người riêng biệt, trí khôn khác nhau, lại có hình dung cái bàn in như nhau, đến muốn người như một cùng nhìn nhận một cái bàn trước mắt mình? Đáng lý mỗi người có trí khôn khác nhau phải có hình dung cái bàn khác nhau chứ?

Còn về con người, nếu không nhận thể xác con người là một thực thể có thật, thì thử hỏi làm sao trả lời được? Tại sao bụng ta cầu, mắt ta mờ, tai ta ù, chân tay ta rù riệt, khi nhịn đói vài ngày? Hay ta bị một bạt ta nẩy lửa, tại sao ta đau điếng đến la trời? Nếu xác ta không có thật, thì ai gánh chịu những nỗi đau đớn khổ cực kể trên?

Lại bảo sự vật sở dĩ có là do trí khôn và tư tưởng của con người mà có, thì trước khi có loài người (có trí khôn, có tư tưởng) thì vật không có sao? Khoa khảo cổ học đã chứng minh được rằng trái đất nẩy cùng cây cối và cầm thú có trước và loài người mới có sau, cách đây lổi 30.000 hay 40.000 năm, còn trái đất đã có trước đây 2.000 triệu năm rồi.

Vậy phải kết luận rằng, phải có một sự vật bên ngoài và chính sự vật ấy ảnh hưởng đến trí khôn ta, để ta ý niệm vì nó.

Bằng ấy chúng có, cũng đủ giúp ta nhận được sự hư thực của thuyết DUY TÂM, và việc thừa nhận chỉ có tinh thần, mà chối bỏ vật chất của thuyết ấy là không hợp lý, không đúng sự thật.

#### B. DUY VẬT LÀ GÌ? - Vật chất là nguồn gốc của vạn vật và tin thần.

DUY VẬT (materialism) là quan niệm triết học chủ trương vật chất là thực tại có người và có trước vạn vật, sinh ra vạn vật và tinh thần. Thủy tổ của thuyết này là Ông DEMOCRITE cách đây trên 2.000 năm đã đề xướng rằng:

"Những hiện tượng trong vũ trụ đều được cấu tạo bằng sự kết hợp của những thành phần vật chất chỏ li ti gọi là nguyên tử."

Ông lại còn đi xa hơn, là đem thuyết DUY VẬT và nguyên tử để giải thích sự cấu tạo của linh hồn. Đồ đệ của ông có rất đông nhưng đáng kể là KARL MARX, ENGELS và gần đây LENINE và các lãnh tụ Cộng Sản.

Đám này giản dị hóa vấn đề bằng cách qui mọi sự vật về vật chất. Luôn cả tinh thần, họ cũng cho là sản phẩm cao đẳng của vật chất, chứ không thuộc linh thiêng (ENGELS).

HOLBACH, một người duy vật nói: "Tôi quả quyết với các ông rằng tôi không trông thấy linh hồn, tôi chỉ trông thấy thể xác tôi. Tôi chỉ biết rằng thể xác tư tưởng, suy luận, đau khổ và vui sướng." Họ cố phủ nhận linh hồn vì họ chỉ tin tưởng những cái gì họ thấy và chứng minh được mà thôi, nên một danh y duy vật BROUSSAIS nói rằng: "Tôi không tin có linh hồn, bởi vì tôi không trông thấy nó ở đầu con dao mổ của tôi."

Họ cho rằng trí khôn con người chẳng khác gì bản năng con vật, nhưng tinh vi hơn thôi.

Chẳng những họ cho tinh thần là sản phẩm của vật chất mà còn quả quyết rằng lý trí là sản phẩm của óc não nữa.

BOUKHARINE, đồng chí của MÁC LÊ nói: "Bộ óc con người dẫn bài tiết ra trí khôn, giống hệt như là gan bài tiết ra mật."

Họ căn cứ trên sự ảnh hưởng của vật chất đối với tinh thần, như những vết thương ở óc có thể làm cho con người mất trí, và chủ trương cho rằng con người luôn luôn thay đổi theo vật chất. Con người ngày nay không phải con người hôm qua, hay con người của mấy mươi năm trước.

MÁC lại dựa vào thuyết DUY VẬT mà chủ trương táo bạo hơn và thực tế hơn là con người chỉ là một con người kinh tế (Homme economique) hay là một cái máy tiêu hóa (Homme stomacal) và tất cả những hành động của con người chỉ vì mục đích kinh tế mà thôi. MÁC-LÊ con làm việc táo bạo và phi nhân hơn nữa là cho mọi lẽ bất công xã hội đều do kinh tế, rồi chủ trương giết người, cướp kinh tế, để lập lại công bằng xã hội.

#### PHÊ BÌNH

Sách vở và báo chí đã nói nhiều về sự thực hư của thuyết DUY VẬT và chủ nghĩa tam vô rồi.

Đây xin nêu một vài vô lý và phản khoa học một cách rõ rệt của thuyết trên, để ta hiểu thêm cho cận kề.

Xin hỏi con người duy vật làm sao chối cãi được cái mà ta gọi là lương tâm, lương trí, và chỉ giùm xem cái gì bài tiết ra nó?

Nếu bảo óc tiết ra tư tưởng, và phần vật chất trong con người luôn luôn thay đổi, thì tư tưởng hẳn cũng phải thay đổi theo. Tại sao có nhiều tư tưởng tốt đẹp như thương cha, mến mẹ, thờ kính ông bà, giúp đỡ người nguy, thương nước mến nòi, trong phần đông con người lại không thay đổi theo thời gian? Còn bao nhiêu những kỷ niệm từ nhỏ đến lớn ta vẫn còn nhớ mãi, thì xin hỏi cái trí nhớ ấy do cái gì bài tiết ra?

Nếu nói một phần nào trong vật chất của con người tiết ra, thì phần ấy sao không thay đổi theo vật chất để cho các kỷ niệm trong đời một con người thay đổi theo?

Họ đặt con người ngang hàng con vật thì thật là một việc vô luân và phản khoa học (vì họ đã đồng hóa trí khôn con người với bản năng con vật).

Khoa học đã phân chia vạn vật ra làm ba loại rõ ràng: khoáng vật (sắt, đá, vàng, thau, v.v...), thực vật (cây, gỗ), động vật (cầm thú) và con người

Thú và người đồng giống động vật nhưng di biệt loại. Người chỉ giống con vật ở phần vật lý và sinh lý mà thôi, nhưng hoàn toàn khác hẳn con vật và trên tất cả vạn vật ở chỗ con người có lý trí, biết suy tưởng và có tự do.

Đành rằng cũng có vài giống vật cảm giác đặng một vài việc trước mắt, chứ làm sao nhớ lại được dĩ vãng và có một ý định gì về tương lai. Lại xin hỏi, làm sao con vật có lương tâm, để cía hỏi việc làm mà con người cho là quấy? Chính CHATEAUBRIAND, một đại văn hào Pháp cũng xác nhận rằng:

“cọp ăn thịt người rồi ngủ yên, còn con người giết kẻ khác xong thì thức mãi” (Le tigre déchire et dort, l’homme tue et veille).

Làm sao con vật cái luân lý của loài người để phân biệt thiện ác? Ta không thể nào nhận được rằng bản năng của con vật và trí khôn của con người là một thứ, chỉ khác nhau ở chỗ tiến triển ít nhiều. MẮC và đồ đệ đã dám cho con người kinh tế và hơn nữa con người là bộ máy tiêu hóa, thì cái thương, vui, buồn, giận của con người là cái gì của bộ máy ấy? Và họ gộp tất cả hành động con người vào mục đích kinh tế, thì xin hỏi các ông ấy khi con người kia đi dạo mát, đánh một bản âm nhạc, hầu một ván cờ, chạy thầy chữa thuốc cho con, hay bỏ thí cho kẻ tật nguyện một bát gạo, hay chăm chú sửa một cây kiềng thàng nẩy qua năm khác, có ai mua giá mấy cũng không bán, từng ấy việc có phải vì mục đích kinh tế hay vì mục đích gì?

Đã nhận ra ít nhiều phần hư thực của hai thuyết DUY TÂM và DUY VẬT, ta có thể kết luận rằng TÂM thì bỏ VẬT, mà VẬT thì phủ nhận TÂM. Tóm lại cả hai đã quan niệm một cách giản dị một vấn đề vô cùng phức tạp khác xa với thuyết DUY LINH cũng trên một vấn đề này.

Dám nhìn con người là một thực thể đơn nguyên như vậy, ta có thể tưởng chừng như DUY TÂM và DUY VẬT như hai anh hề gánh hát xiếc đang biểu diễn một chân trên sợi dây căng thẳng.

### III. THUYẾT DUY LINH - DUY LINH là gì?

Danh từ này hiểu theo nghĩa chữ “spiritualisme”.

Học thuyết DUY LINH có hai nghĩa.

1. Về phương diện tâm lý, DUY LINH chủ trương các hiện tượng tâm linh như suy tưởng và ý chí không thể giải thích bằng hiện tượng sinh lý.
2. Về phương diện bản thể (ontologie), thì DUY LINH chủ trương có hai thứ hoàn toàn khác nhau: một đàng là trí khôn với tư duy và tự do, một đàng là vật chất máy móc cần thiết.

Tuy nhiên, ngày nay nói đến DUY LINH, người ta thường nghĩ tới hai cuộc sống đối lập: cuộc sống thú tính (vie animale) và cuộc sống tâm linh (vie sprituelle). Chủ nghĩa tâm linh đề cao tinh thần, phát huy cuộc sống linh hồn và sẵn sàng hy sinh đời sống thú tính, nếu thú tính bất kham không uốn nắn được theo lý tưởng của linh hồn.

Như vậy, DUY LINH khác hẳn DUY VẬT.

DUY LINH quan niệm rằng trong vũ trụ cả con người phải do một bàn tay vô hình vô ảnh, toàn năng sáng tạo và chủ trương con người gồm có linh hồn và thể xác, mà linh hồn là thiêng liêng, bất tử, biết suy tưởng và tự do.

Hai tiếng DUY LINH có nghĩa là chú trọng đặc biệt về phần linh hồn, phần tinh thần làm cho con người cao cả và linh thiêng trong vạn vật.

Con người là con vật có lý trí, nghĩa là không phải vật chất không, hay tinh thần không, mà chứa đựng một lượt cả vật chất lẫn tinh thần. Chính hai nguyên khởi này đã tạo ra bao nhiêu phức tạp trong con người.



Là một thể xác, con người phải chịu tất cả nhiên luật (vật lý và sinh lý) chi phối, nghĩa là: con người bị gò bó trong không gian và thời gian (ở một xứ nào và sống một thời gian nào đó); con người bị hấp dẫn hướng về mình (ích kỷ cá nhân, nghĩ đến mình nhiều hơn); con người ưa thú nhục dục hơn thú tinh thần (thích thú đồ tường hơn các thú thanh cao); theo thời gian, những tế bào trong con người thay đổi, biến hóa (trẻ khác, lớn khác, già khác); xác con người nặng nề, yếu đuối (chập chạp và hay đau ốm).

Nhưng trái lại, là một tinh thần, nên con người có những tài năng xuất sắc, nghĩa là nhờ trí khôn con người vượt khỏi thời gian và không gian (thương kẻ ở xa, nhớ được người quá cố, nghĩ đến việc sắp xảy ra); con người hướng ra ngoài khác hơn mình (vị tha bác ái) và hướng về ích chung. Con người có tự do lựa chọn, thực hiện chương trình của mình vạch sẵn (chọn cái tốt hơn, muốn hành động lúc nào cũng được tùy ý mình) con người của 'tôi' không thay đổi (những gì mình làm mấy mươi năm về trước vẫn không quên); con người nhờ có linh hồn mà nhan chóng (vui, buồn, thương, cảm, hay suy nghĩ về một việc gì rất mau).

DUY LINH nhìn nhận những mâu thuẫn kể trên trong con người, để quả quyết rằng trong con người có sự hiện diện song song của linh hồn và thể xác.

Thuộc bản tính của vật chất, thể xác con người phải kèm hãm, biến đổi và tiêu tan. Còn phần linh hồn thiêng liêng, bất tử ấy làm cho con người cao quý và có một sứ mạng bất diệt là cải tạo chính mình cho đầy đủ nhân vị (trí mở mang), thương yêu giúp đỡ mọi người (xây dựng đạo đức cho mình) và kính trọng đấng tạo hóa đã ban ơn sáng tạo vũ trụ và muôn loài.

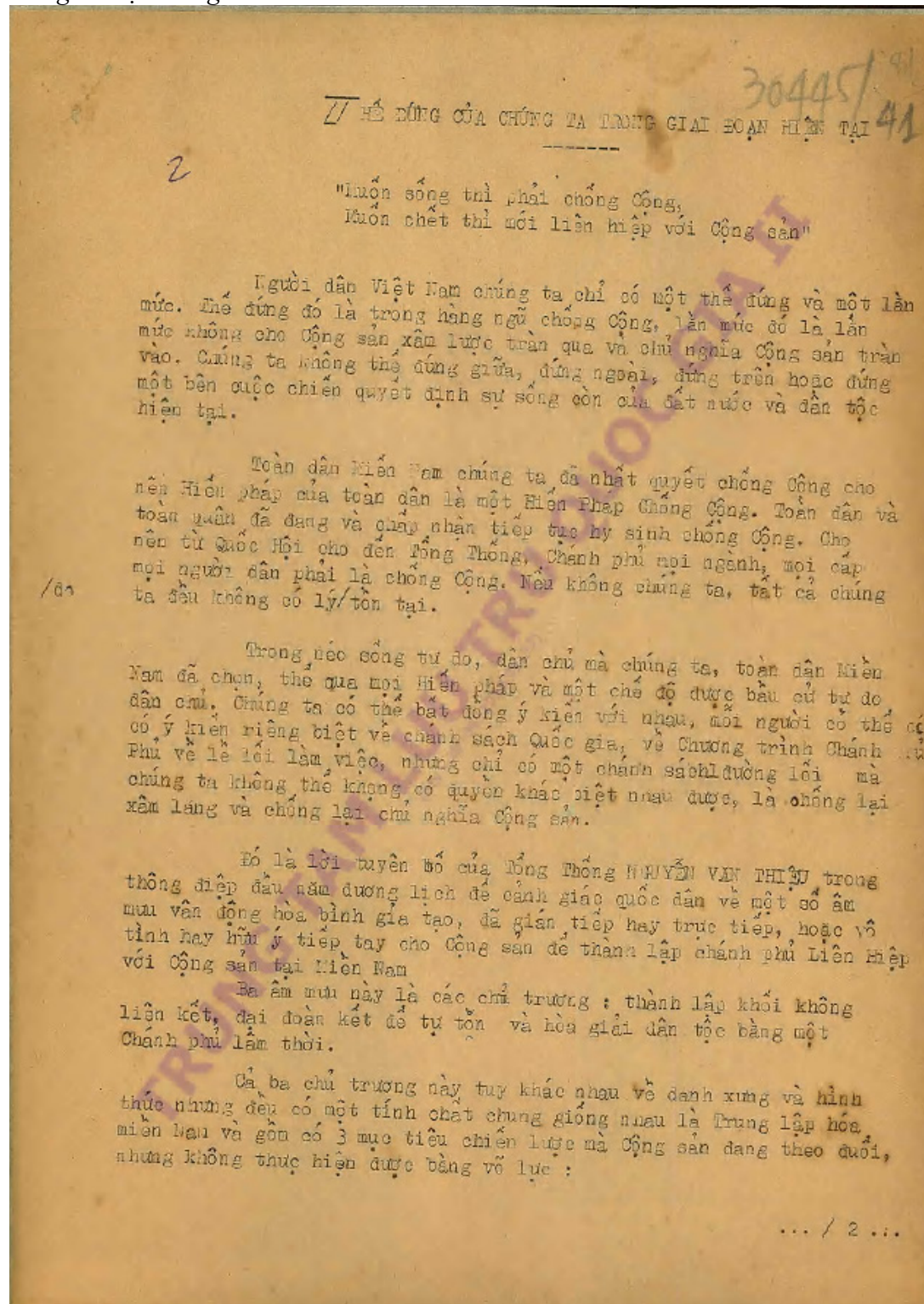
Vì nhận trong con người có sự phối hợp chắc chắn giữa linh hồn và xác nên DUY LINH chủ trương tôn trọng nhân vị (con người có xác có linh hồn đầy đủ) bằng cách nuôi dưỡng thể xác cho đủ sức làm dụng cụ giúp đỡ cho tinh thần đủ khả năng hoàn toàn sứ mạng, đạt đến mục đích cuối cùng là toàn chân, toàn thiện, toàn mỹ.

Tóm lại, thuyết DUY LINH tôn trọng nhân vị, nghĩa là trọng nhân phẩm của tất cả mọi người không phân biệt địa vị đẳng cấp và theo căn bản DUY LINH chủ nghĩa nhân vị phải tổ chức gia đình, chính trị, xã hội, kinh tế, văn hóa thể nào, để người nhân vị không phân biệt là ai, đều được hưởng tự do, hạnh phúc trên cõi trần này.

[END OF DOCUMENT 12]

## DOCUMENT 13:

Source: Phủ Thủ Tướng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa 30445, *Tổ Chức Các Khóa Học tập, hội thảo, về thông tin đại chúng năm 1970.*



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- Phải nhận căn bản pháp lý của chế độ dân chủ hợp Hiến, hợp Pháp của ta hiện tại gồm có Hiến pháp, Chánh phủ dân cử và các cơ cấu dân chủ.
- Từ bỏ các người bạn đồng minh và chính nghĩa chống Cộng xô đẩy dân tộc vào thế cô lập để Cộng sản dễ bề thôn tính nốt Miền Nam.
- Phải hợp với các yêu sách của Cộng sản tại Hòa đàm Ba Lê là lật đổ Chánh phủ hợp pháp của ta và thay thế bằng một Chánh phủ Liên Hiệp thân Cộng mệnh danh là Chánh phủ hòa giải dân tộc.

Cả ba chủ trương này đều phản bội lại Hiến pháp, nguyện vọng của toàn dân muốn sống trong một chế độ tự do không Cộng sản và phản bội lại xương máu và sự hy sinh của toàn dân trong suốt 20 năm qua để giữ cho đất nước này khỏi lọt vào tay Cộng sản.

Tại đây chúng ta không đặt vấn đề cá nhân tác giả của các chủ trương đó vì chế độ qua là một chế độ dân chủ. Tuy nhiên chúng ta cần phải đặt vấn đề xét các chủ trương đó có thực sự mang lại hòa bình cho chúng ta không, hay chỉ là một hình thức để dẫn dắt dân tộc ta vào hố sâu nô lệ Cộng sản.

Vì vậy chúng ta không cần tìm hiểu riêng từng mỗi chủ trương mà chỉ cần xét đến mục tiêu chính của ba chủ trương là muốn Trung lập hóa Miền Nam, để hiểu rõ rằng tại sao chúng ta không thể chấp nhận chế độ trung lập, trên thế giới này có mấy đường lối trung lập và tại sao chúng ta lại chỉ có một con đường duy nhất là chiến đấu chống lại Cộng sản.

Ý thức được như vậy chúng ta sẽ nhìn rõ thấy tác dụng tai hại của các chủ trương trên giữa lúc chúng ta đang cần phải nỗ lực hết sức mình để đập tan các âm mưu chính trị của Cộng sản trong khi chúng không thể nào đạt được bằng quân sự.

Đồng thời chúng ta sẽ hiểu rằng chúng ta còn phải cố gắng nhiều hơn nữa để tiếp nối sứ mạng của các thế hệ trước giao lại cho chúng ta.

Đó là sứ mạng chống Cộng là thắng Cộng sản để cứu nước.

I.- NHẬN ĐỊNH VỀ CHÍNH SÁCH TRUNG LẬP

11)- Chính sách Trung lập là gì ?

Chính sách trung lập là kế hoạch chính trị đứng giữa không thiên vị bên nào.

Như vậy theo ngôn ngữ thông thường, chính sách Trung lập có nghĩa là đường lối ngoại giao của một Quốc gia không hữu khuynh không tả khuynh, nói rõ hơn là không theo khối Tự do dân chủ (tây phương) cũng không theo lối độc tài Cộng sản. Do đó người ta còn gọi là chính sách đứng ngoài khối. Vì rằng đường lối chủ trương của hai khối trái ngược hầu như nhau. Khối tự do dân chủ do Hoa Kỳ hướng dẫn chủ trương tương trợ lẫn nhau, đồng tiến cùng quyết nhận bước xâm lăng chính phục thế giới của Cộng sản. Còn khối độc tài cộng sản do Nga-Hoa cầm đầu luôn luôn âm mưu xích hĩa các nước thế giới để thành lập Đế Quốc Cộng sản.

Trước sự xung đột của hai khối, lãnh tụ của một số quốc gia, một phần mưu bực về quyền lợi của mình, một phần vì muốn lợi dụng sự xung đột của hai khối để thủ lợi của cả hai bên nên đã chủ trương theo đường lối Trung lập. Tuy nhiên trên thực tế sự việc nhiều khi đã diễn biến không đúng như sự mong ước của các nước này.

12)- Các đường lối trung lập :

Hiện nay trong hàng ngũ các nước Trung lập trên thế giới có đủ các chế độ khác nhau. Từ chế độ quân chủ chuyên chế như Arabie Soudana tới Chính phủ Lác-xít như Nam-tu, từ chế độ thần quyền như Népal, Afganistan tới dân chủ đại nghị như Ấn độ. Trong số này có 3 nước Trung lập được thế giới chú ý đến là Ai-Cập, Ấn độ và Thụy sĩ. Nhiều người đã phân tách những điểm khác nhau giữa ba chính sách Trung lập của những nước này. Ai-cập coi chính sách Trung lập là một chiến thuật để giành quyền lợi trong tay các nước Tây phương vì có nhiều mỏ dầu. Ông Ấn Độ quan niệm chính sách Trung lập là một đường lối cố thể nâng Ấn Độ lên hàng ngũ một cường quốc đứng giữa hai khối tự do và cộng sản. Riêng trường hợp Thụy sĩ được nhiều người chú ý hơn cả và coi như là một hình thức Trung lập ước định do các cường quốc đồng ý với nhau tôn trọng. Bên Trung lập Thụy sĩ được cấu tạo bởi Hiệp ước Quốc tế Vienna năm 1815. Đây là một cam kết vô thời hạn giữa một tiểu quốc và các cường quốc khác nhau. Vì quyền lợi riêng các cường quốc bấy giờ đã cam kết với nhau không xâm phạm lãnh thổ của Quốc gia Trung lập này. Tuy nhiên điều này không có nghĩa là

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Thụy sĩ sẽ có thể Trung lập mãi mãi, mặc dầu đã có sự ước định giữa các cường quốc, nhưng nếu các quốc gia đã kết ước đồng ý bãi ước thì có thể Hiệp ước Trung lập của Thụy sĩ sẽ bị hủy bỏ và nền an ninh của Quốc gia Trung lập này không còn được bảo đảm. Ngoài ra mọi quốc gia Trung lập còn có một sắc thái riêng biệt gần như mâu thuẫn với chính sách Trung lập. Tỷ dụ : Tunisie, Maroc theo chính sách trung lập nhưng lại có vẻ thiên Tây phương.

Nam tư, Quy-ba tuyên bố trung lập nhưng lại theo chính thể Mác-xít nên thiên hẳn về Cộng sản.

Ái cập ở trong nước đã từng lùng bắt các Đảng viên Cộng-sản qua khách, nhưng đối ngoại có một thái độ Trung lập thiên Cộng hòa là thiên Tây phương. Miền Điện cũng có một chính sách Trung lập như Ấn độ, trong nước vẫn diệt trừ du-kích Cộng sản, nhưng bên ngoài vẫn áp dụng chính sách thân thiện với Trung Cộng. Căn cứ vào các nhận xét trên ta có thể nói rằng không có một quốc gia nào giữ được một thái độ Trung lập thực sự theo nghĩa Trung dung cổ điển. Vì vậy ta có thể tạm chia các đường lối Trung lập làm hai loại :

### 13)- Qui chế Trung lập và Chính sách Trung lập :

Qui chế Trung lập theo nghĩa đơn giản nhất của nó là không tham dự vào một cuộc chiến tranh quốc tế. Tuy nhiên trên thực tế thì khái niệm này cũng phức tạp như khái niệm chính sách Trung lập nói ở đoạn trên, nên qui chế Trung lập với chính sách Trung lập có nhiều điểm khác nhau :

Điểm thứ nhất : Qui chế Trung lập là qui chế Pháp lý được qui định bởi Quốc Tế Công Pháp còn chính sách Trung lập là một đường lối chính trị, một đường lối ngoại giao không có nội dung pháp lý rõ rệt.

Điểm thứ hai : Qui chế Trung lập thường được công nhận và bảo đảm trên phương diện quốc tế bởi một văn kiện có hiệu lực pháp lý rõ rệt, chính sách Trung lập không bắt buộc phải được công nhận và bảo đảm bởi một hay nhiều quốc gia đệ tam.

Điểm thứ ba : Qui chế Trung lập để minh định thái độ của một Quốc gia trong thời kỳ chiến tranh. Trái lại chính sách Trung lập là một đường lối chính trị, có thể thực hiện, trong thời bình cũng như trong thời loạn.

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Các Luật gia còn phân chia Trung lập làm 2 loại ; Trung lập vĩnh viễn và Trung lập tạm thời :

- Trung lập vĩnh viễn như ; Thụy-Sĩ, Áo.
- Trung lập tạm thời như Hoa kỳ từ 1939 đến 1941, I-Pan-Nho từ 1939 đến 1945.

Tuy nhiên các quốc gia có thể giữ vững được đường lối Trung lập hay không còn tùy thuộc ở quốc gia đó mạnh hay yếu. Vì thế cho nên Ô. Hammarkjoeld khi giảng dạy tại Học viện Luật Quốc Tế La haye (1923) đã nói rằng : "chỉ có thể Trung lập được chừng nào người láng giềng muốn thế".

Lịch sử cũng đã chứng minh những nước lớn và mạnh ít khi đứng Trung lập tuy có đi điều kiện, vì họ có đủ sức mạnh đẩy lui mọi sự xâm lăng.

Cần những nước nhỏ, dù ở qui chế Trung lập hẳn hoi cũng khó mà tránh được sự xâm lăng của các cường quốc. Bằng chứng là nước Bỉ có qui chế Trung lập vĩnh viễn từ năm 1831 vẫn bị Đức xâm chiếm năm 1914 và năm 1939 để mượn đường đánh Pháp. Vì vậy mà Bỉ đã từ bỏ qui chế Trung lập và gia nhập khối Bắc Đại Tây Dương.

- Chính sách Trung lập của một số quốc gia :

Những nước theo chính sách Trung lập phần lớn là những nước nhỏ hoặc yếu lại ở vào một vị trí tiếp giáp giữa hai khối nên nhiều khi bất đắc dĩ phải thành Trung lập vì không có lực lượng chiến đấu, sợ theo khối này sẽ/ khối kia gây hại.

Cũng có khi vì nhỏ yếu nên chỉ có thể trung lập được nữa chừng, nghĩa là Trung lập đối với nước này nhưng không Trung lập đối với nước kia. Thí dụ : Phần-Lan chiến đấu bên cạnh Đức Quốc Xã chống Nga xô nhưng Trung lập đối với Anh-Mỹ. Nước Thụy Điển Trung lập trong thế chiến thứ hai, nhưng có bao nhiêu quân sắt đều phải bán cho Đức vì hạm đội Đức phong tỏa các cửa biển Thụy điển khiến không thể bán cho Đồng Minh được.

14) - Trường hợp 2 nước Trung lập sát nách Việt Nam Cộng Hòa Qu-bốt Ai-Lao.

- Cam-bốt tuyên bố Trung lập từ 1955, Thủ Tướng Sihanouk đã nhắc đi nhắc lại rằng Cam-bốt Trung lập theo kiểu Thụy-sĩ, Thụy Điển, chứ không theo Ai cập hay Nam dương (nghĩa là qui chế Trung lập chứ không phải chính sách Trung lập) Trung lập của Cam-bốt phải có đủ 3 điều kiện : Một là không nghiêng về khối nào, luôn luôn đứng giữa. Hai là không dùng vũ lực để trả lời các sự phỉ báng và khiêu khích. Không coi hai Khối Nga-Mỹ như kẻ thù mà coi như bạn. Ba là đoàn kết với với các nước Trung lập khác, nhưng không hợp thành khối thứ ba.

Nhưng trên thực tế Cam-bốt đã nghiêng về Khối Công-sản và tỏ thái độ thù nghịch với Khối Thế Giới Tự Do. Riêng với VNCH, Cam-bốt đã có thái độ thiên lệch như : công nhận và thiết lập bang giao trên cấp bậc Đại sứ với Bắc Việt và MTCMN, cho phép binh sĩ Bắc-Việt xử dụng lãnh thổ Cam-bốt để tấn công VNCH, tiếp tế cho quân đội chính qui Bắc Việt, cho phép Bắc Việt xử dụng Hải cảng Sihanoukville để du nhập vũ khí đạn dược tiếp tế cho Công quân ở Miền Nam. Như vậy, Cam-bốt không còn giữ được tánh cách Trung lập nữa vì bị áp lực của Công-sản.

\* Ai-Lao cũng tuyên bố Trung lập từ 1955, các cường quốc đã loang trọng tuyên bố tôn trọng chủ quyền và toàn vẹn lãnh thổ Ai-Lao. Nhưng Pahtet Lào (Lào Cộng) vẫn hoạt động mạnh, trái hẳn với Cam-bốt, Công-sản chỉ hoạt động một cách yếu ớt. Ai-Lao còn tổ chức Chánh Phủ Liên Hiệp với Lào Cộng và được Hội nghị Genève 1962 bác bỏ nền Trung lập của Ai-Lao. Nhưng trên thực tế Pahtet Lào tay sai của Công-sản Bắc Việt vẫn tiếp tục đánh phá Ai-Lao với sự trợ giúp của quân công-sản Bắc Việt, và Bắc Việt vẫn tiếp tục dùng lãnh thổ Ai-Lao làm nơi trú quân, chuyển quân để tấn công xâm lược VNCH.

II. - TẠI SAO CHÚNG TA KHÔNG CHẤP NHẬN TRUNG LẬP :

- Cuộc kháng chiến chống xâm lăng CS của nhân dân ta kéo dài trên 20 năm và gây cho chúng ta nhiều tổn thất về sinh mạng cũng như tài sản. Trong chúng ta không ai là không muốn chấm dứt chiến tranh để được sống trong hòa bình và thịnh vượng.

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Nhưng chấm dứt như thế nào ? Đó là một vấn đề. Chấm dứt chiến tranh trong tự do hay nô lệ ? Đó là điều ai cũng muốn biết.

Lợi dụng sự nóng lòng mong muốn hòa bình của dân chúng một số người đã đưa ra các chiêu bài Trung lập. Chúng ta không thể chấp nhận chế độ trung lập vì nhiều lý do :

21)- Địa lý thiên nhiên của chúng ta không thích hợp cho chế độ Trung lập.

Hoàn cảnh địa lý không cho phép chúng ta Trung lập bởi vì lãnh thổ của chúng ta ở phía Tây và phía Bắc giáp với Bắc Việt và Ai-lao, phía Tây tiếp giáp với Cam bốt, phía Đông và Nam giáp biển Nam Hải. Bắc Việt hiện đứng về phe Xã hội chủ nghĩa, can tâm làm tay sai cho Đế Quốc Nga sô và Trung Cộng, để làm lính tiền phong mở rộng Đế quốc Cộng sản. Ai lao đang bị cộng sản xâm lăng và chiếm giữ nửa phần lãnh thổ phía Bắc để làm căn cứ tiếp vận cho cuộc chiến tranh xâm lược VICH. Còn Cam bốt tuy theo chính sách Trung lập nhưng lại có thái độ thù nghịch với chúng ta và thân thiện với Cộng sản.

Trong hoàn cảnh như vậy nếu chúng ta Trung lập không có một binh lực mạnh chắc chắn chúng ta không thể nào sống yên ổn được.

Chính vì điều này Tổng Thống Nguyễn Văn Thiệu đã ví hoàn cảnh của chúng ta như một người lương thiện sống giữa nhà của một thầy tu và nhà của một kẻ cướp, vì thầy tu sẽ không bao giờ khổ để chúng ta nhưng chắc chắn tên cướp sẽ không bao giờ để chúng ta được yên ổn.

22)- CS không bao giờ chấp nhận chế độ Trung lập.

Giáo điều của Cộng sản đã có những khẩu hiệu rất mạnh như Công Nông liên minh thiết lập chế độ vô sản chuyên chính và vô sản thế giới hãy đoàn kết lại để làm cách mạng, thế giới hoặc quân chúng đỏ máu trên chiến trường là một hình thức của cuộc đấu tranh giai cấp. Vì vậy CS không bao giờ chấp nhận chế độ Trung lập trong nội bộ CS cũng như ở ngoài khối CS. Trái lại chính sách Trung lập chỉ được CS sử dụng làm phương tiện chiến thuật để làm suy yếu đối phương, cô lập đối phương để chờ một thời cơ thuận tiện, CS sẽ tổ chức một cuộc đấu tranh chính trị phối hợp quân sự để đấu tranh cướp chính quyền về tay cộng sản.



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Chiến thuật này gồm có 4 giai đoạn :

- Giai đoạn thứ 1 : Đòi hỏi một chính sách trung lập, không thân Nga cũng không thân Mỹ.  
 Giai đoạn thứ 2 : Tuyên truyền gây ảnh hưởng để lái nền Trung lập thân Nga nhưng không có cam kết với Mỹ.  
 Giai đoạn thứ 3 : Tuyên truyền gây ảnh hưởng để lái nền Trung lập thân Nga và thù ghét Mỹ.  
 Giai đoạn thứ 4 : Đòi hấn theo khối Nga chống Mỹ.

Chỉ huy CS là Dimitriakovsky đã giải thích về chính sách Trung lập giả dối của CS như sau : "Muốn thắng, chúng ta phải dùng phương pháp tấn công bất thành linh lúc ấy bọn tư bản đang nằm ngổ. Trước hết, chúng ta hãy tung ra phong trào đòi tranh hòa bình một cách hết sức rầm rộ như chưa hề có. Chúng ta sẽ tổ những thái độ vô cùng mềm dẻo. Các nước tư bản khó khăn sẽ sung sướng cộng tác với chính cái sẽ tiêu diệt chúng. Chúng sẽ vui thích nắm lấy cơ hội có thể gây tình giao hảo với ta. Thừa lúc hững hờ không đề phòng, chúng ta sẽ tiêu diệt chúng bằng những bàn tay nắm chặt".

Riêng trong nội bộ của CS họ không bao giờ chấp nhận chế độ Trung lập.

Năm 1956 Nga xô đã đàn áp thẳng phong trào đòi Trung lập hóa Hung Gia Lợi vì nếu để Hung Gia Lợi Trung lập thì khối CS sẽ bị sức mẽ.

Trước thế chiến thứ hai, Nga xô đã kết luận hiệp ước Trung lập với nhiều Quốc gia như : Phần Lan, Ba Lan, Lettonie, Lituanie, Estonie. Nhưng chỉ ít lâu sau Nga xô đã xé các hiệp ước đòi sát nhập Lettonie, Lituanie, Estonie vào lãnh thổ Nga.

23)- Cộng sản Bắc Việt vẫn chưa chịu từ bỏ âm mưu xâm lăng Miền Nam

Cho tới nay mặc dầu bị thất bại trên khắp chiến trường, mất gần hết địa bàn nông thôn và bị thiệt hại trên nửa triệu quân CS chưa chịu từ bỏ âm mưu xâm lược Miền Nam.

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Tại Hòa đàm Ba lê Phái đoàn CS vẫn không chịu chấp nhận các đề nghị hợp tình hợp lý của Phái đoàn ta và các quân đội ngoại nhập trong đó có quân đội Bắc Việt sẽ triệt thoái song phương ra khỏi VN và tổ chức tuyển cử tự do dưới sự kiểm soát của Quốc tế để nhân dân Miền Nam tự do lựa chọn chính thể của mình và CS ngoan cố đòi chúng ta phải Liên hiệp với CS và Quân đội Đồng Minh phải rút khỏi VN vô điều kiện.

Tại Quốc nội CS vẫn gia tăng các hoạt động khủng bố phá hoại nhằm vào dân chúng.

Án mưu xâm lược Miền nam vẫn chưa được chúng xác nhận qua bài xã luận của Võ Nguyên Giáp đăng trên tờ Nhân Dân nhật báo nhân ngày kỷ niệm thứ 25 ngày thành lập quân đội CS Bắc Việt. Do đó họ Võ thừa nhận rằng chiến tranh cách mạng (Xâm lược Miền Nam) còn kéo dài và cho chúng cuộc thế nào cũng thắng. Họ Võ kêu gọi dân chúng Bắc Việt hãy tin nhiệm vào sự lãnh đạo của Đảng CS.

Mới đây trong bản nghị quyết số 9 và Nghị quyết số 10 của Trung Ương Đảng Miền Nam, do quân đội ta tịch thu được, CS vẫn tiếp tục kêu gọi các cán bộ của chúng hãy đẩy mạnh công tác tuyên truyền chính trị để tạo thời cơ cho các cuộc tấn công võ trang cướp chính quyền.

Trong những hoàn cảnh như vậy, nếu chúng ta chấp nhận trung lập thì không khác nào chúng ta buông súng rồi đưa tay cho CS trói và đặt ách nô lệ lên đầu cổ chúng ta.

#### 24) - Lục tiêu của CS Trung lập hóa Miền Nam.

Sau trên 15 năm chủ trương xâm lược Miền Nam, CS Miền Bắc đã dùng mọi thủ đoạn mà vẫn không đạt được một thắng lợi nào trái lại còn bị thất bại sâu cay về chính trị, quân sự và kinh tế.

- Về chính trị : Dân chúng càng ngày càng chán ghét ghê tởm bộ mặt giả nhân giả nghĩa của CS. Vì đã nhìn rõ sự bịp bợm dã man tàn ác của chúng. Ngay đến các cán binh CS cũng hết tin tưởng, nên ngày càng rời rạc đồng hơn.

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- Về quân sự : CS đã kiệt quệ, nhất là từ Tết Mậu Thân đến nay, chúng không còn khả năng để mở những trận đánh quy mô và sang phải lùi trở lại chiến thuật du kích để bị thiệt hại và có thể tiếp tục chiến tranh trường kỳ.

- Về kinh tế : Miền Bắc đã bị tàn phá nặng nề, chưa hàn gắn nổi nên CS không còn có khả năng cung ứng đầy đủ cho chiến trường Miền Nam. Do đó, nên CS đánh phải ngòi vào bàn hội đàm Ba lô, nhưng trên thực tế CS chỉ muốn dùng cuộc hòa đàm làm công cụ tuyên truyền và áp dụng chiến thuật vừa đánh vừa đàm để hy vọng thâu đoạt một vài chiến thắng hầu đặt điều kiện với ta và Hoa Kỳ. Cũng vì vậy nên qua 54 phiên họp mà hòa hội vẫn còn bế tắc và kế hoạch Trung lập hòa Miền Nam chỉ là một sách lược giai đoạn, một kế hoạch cuối cùng để thôn tính Miền Nam.

Cộng sản đã từng tuyên bố rằng : "Trung lập là dân chủ, chấp nhận sự tồn tại của những xu hướng chính trị khác nhau". Nhưng thực sự thì tại Miền Bắc CS đã áp dụng chế độ độc tài Đảng trị, tước hết mọi quyền tự do của nhân dân, luôn cả quyền tự do tín ngưỡng. Việt Cộng đã biến Miền Bắc thành một hỏa ngục, dân chúng sống trong cảnh tối tăm như một bay nô lệ, tai nạn thôn du mọi phương diện. Vì vậy, chủ trương Trung lập, hòa bình của VC chỉ là một âm mưu làm phân tán tư tưởng, làm suy yếu lực lượng chống Cộng của nhân dân ta, đồng thời tạo nên một tình trạng hỗn độn, làm cho nhân dân không phân biệt được ai là bạn, ai là thù để VC dễ bề thực hiện mục tiêu thôn tính Miền Nam của chúng, hay nói khác đi chúng ta đã vô tình tạo cho CS một thế đứng hợp pháp trong cộng đồng VN.

25)- Trung lập là phản bội Hiến Pháp Việt Nam Cộng Hòa.

Điều 4 Hiến Pháp VNCH đã minh thị xác nhận :

"Việt Nam Cộng Hòa chống lại chủ nghĩa Cộng sản dưới mọi hình thức.

Tội hành vi nhằm mục đích tuyên truyền hay thực hiện chủ nghĩa CS đều bị cấm chế".

Chúng ta không thể đi ngược lại Hiến Pháp kết tinh ý nguyện của toàn dân. Chúng ta cũng không thể phản bội lại công lao xương máu của toàn dân đã hy sinh suốt 20 năm nay để bảo vệ tự do và độc lập.

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26)- Trung lập là từ bỏ thế thắng lợi hiện tại.

Chúng ta đang thắng trên khắp chiến trường. Dù ai ngoan cố đến đâu cũng không thể phủ nhận được sự thực khách quan đó. Chúng ta không thể vì lý do nào mà từ bỏ thế chiến thắng hiện tại bởi vì chúng ta đã đập gãy xương sống của quân đội xâm lược CS và làm chủ hầu hết nông thôn.

Chỉ trong vòng 2 năm từ Tết Mậu Thân đến 31.12.1969, CS đã thiệt hại 400.321 tên và trên 140.000 căn bích vệ hồi chánh kể từ khi Chánh Phủ ban hành Chính sách chiêu hồi.

Trong khi đó chúng ta đã kiểm soát được 97% dân số, bầu cử được 95,5% tổng số Xã và 91% tổng số ấp trong toàn quốc. Dân chúng đã có thể đi từ Bến Hải đến Cà Mau một cách dễ dàng. Các trục giao thông chính yếu khác về đường thủy cũng như đường bộ cũng không còn sợ CS đón đường cướp của giết người như trước.

Chiến thắng đang tiến gần đến với chúng ta. Chúng ta không thể vì một phút nóng lòng hay nhẹ dạ mà từ bỏ những gì suốt 10 năm nay mới thu lượm được. Đó là đập nát đầu con rắn CS để kiến tạo một nền hòa bình vĩnh cửu trong hiện tại và tương lai.

Với những chiến thắng lớn lao trong hai năm nay, ta có thể nắm chắc thắng lợi trong tay, nên quyết khai thác thắng lợi đến cùng, không khi nào chịu trung lập với CS.

27)- Quan điểm của Tổng Thống VNCH về vấn đề Trung lập.

Ngày 26.1.1970 trong buổi nói chuyện thân mật với các hội viên Hội Tổng Tài Kỳ các nhật báo VN. Tổng Thống đã xác định quan điểm của Tổng Thống đối với các chủ trương Trung lập và không liên kết.

Trong buổi nói chuyện Tổng Thống đã khẳng định không chỉ trích cá nhân chủ trương các giải pháp không liên kết mà chỉ chỉ trích các chủ trương của các người này đưa ra.

Theo Tổng Thống : Chủ nghĩa CS là cái ung nhọt của thời đại nhằm hủy diệt quốc gia dân tộc. Vì vậy nhiệm vụ trước mắt của toàn dân là phải chống Cộng để cứu nước bảo vệ độc lập và tự do chứ không phải là chỉ cần từ bỏ nhiệm vụ chống Cộng là có thể bảo vệ được độc lập như một số người chủ trương.

Tổng Thống nói : "... Độc lập và Cộng sản : Tuy tôi không ngạc nhiên khi nghe nói rằng : "Độc lập mới là chính yếu, còn chống Cộng là thứ yếu", vì tôi đã biết những người thốt câu nói ấy và hiểu dụng ý của họ nhưng tôi cần nói rõ là lập luận này hàm ý rằng chúng ta, Miền Nam Việt Nam chưa độc lập. CS cũng nói thế, nhưng mà để bịp dân với khẩu hiệu nhiều giải phóng.

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Trong thời kháng chiến chống Pháp, tất cả những người Ái quốc, toàn dân đều chiến đấu giành độc lập. Và cũng vì độc lập quốc gia mà vô số người quốc gia đã bị CS sát hại. Đến khi CS thông đồng với Thực dân chia đôi đất nước, thì Miền Nam đã có độc lập thực sự. Đến khi CS từ miền Bắc tràn xuống xâm lăng Miền Nam thì quả thật nền độc lập của VNCH đã bị đe dọa. Xâm lăng Miền Nam là chủ trương nằm trong kế hoạch trường kỳ của CS. Và điều mà người ta cần ý thức là không phải vì miền Nam liên kết với các nước tự do mà CS tiến đánh.

Trong cuộc chiến tranh này, CS Bắc Việt xâm lăng để đặt nền thống trị độc tài trên Miền Nam Việt Nam. Trong khi ký kết Hiệp định Genève thì CS đã để lại Miền Nam một số Cán binh và vũ khí, rồi những năm sau đưa một số lớn các binh công bộ đội chính quy từ Bắc vào xâm lược ta, vi phạm cả nền trung lập và lãnh thổ của những nước láng giềng. Sau đó, ta buộc phải yêu cầu các quốc gia tự do khác đến giúp chúng ta bảo vệ tự do, chỗ không phải là vì ta liên kết với các nước Tây phương nên CS mới đánh ta.

Ngay biện luận đảo lộn nguyên nhân là cuộc xâm lăng do CS khởi xướng trước và hậu quả là việc Hồng Minh đến VN giúp chúng ta lâu sau đó, sẽ đưa đến kết luận ngay thơ cho rằng: chỉ cần từ bỏ các đồng minh của ta thì CS sẽ đe dọa chúng ta xôn.

Lý luận như vậy phủ nhận tất cả những kinh nghiệm về chính sách xâm lăng của CS, phủ nhận cả mục tiêu bành trướng của Đế quốc CS - và CS Bắc Việt mà chúng không hề dấu diếm, và còn có hậu quả rất tai hại cho công cuộc chiến đấu bảo vệ tự do của chúng ta.

VNCH không phải là chiến trường thụ động giữa hai khối CS và Thế giới tự do. Chính chúng ta tích cực chống CS xâm lăng để bảo vệ nền độc lập và tự do của chúng ta, và kết quả cuộc chiến đấu của chúng ta sẽ có ảnh hưởng quan trọng đến tương lai của Thế giới tự do, chứ không phải là vì ta chiến đấu hộ cho Thế giới tự do, nên cuộc chiến tranh kéo dài.

Cho nên chúng ta cố gắng giữ độc lập là việc đứng đầu. Và lại, với CS và bằng vào sự định nghĩa CS thì không có vấn đề độc lập quốc gia, mà chỉ có vấn đề CS thống trị toàn thế giới. Cũng vì không hiểu CS và quân xét không đúng mức nên khi bắt đầu kháng chiến chống Pháp, người quốc gia không chủ trương đánh chung, đánh riêng, để rồi CS cướp quyền lãnh đạo kháng chiến và tiêu diệt các phân tử Ái quốc..."

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Đối với vấn đề Trung lập hóa vùng Đông Nam Á Tổng Thống cho rằng các biện pháp này chỉ có tính chất một chiều :

"... Mặt khác, sự kiện nói trên cũng chứng tỏ tánh cách nguy hiểm của một vài chính khách ngoại quốc, quên cả lịch sử gần đây liên thực trạng hiện tại, chủ trương rằng muốn có hòa bình tại vùng này chỉ cần Trung lập hóa Đông Nam Á. Đường nhiên, các chính thể CS không bao giờ chấp nhận "Trung lập" vậy những người đó thật ra chỉ chủ trương "Trung lập hóa một chiều" cho những quốc gia tự do vùng Đông Nam Á mà thôi, với mục đích làm giảm mối tương trợ giữa những nước trong Thế giới Tự Do trước sự bành trướng của CS xâm lăng tại vùng này..."

"... Vị trí và hoàn cảnh của một nước luôn luôn có ảnh hưởng đến chính sách đối ngoại. Miền Nam VN là cửa ngõ ra Thái Bình Dương và là Trung Tâm về quật tủa xuống Đông Nam Á. Như vậy vị trí của VNCH rất quan trọng cho sự thăng bằng và ổn định cả Miền Đông Nam Á. Cũng vì tánh cách đặc biệt quan trọng của vị trí Nam VN nên Quốc tế CS đã quyết định từ lâu phải chiếm cho bằng được.

Hoàn cảnh của VNCH là hoàn cảnh bị bao vây bởi thế lực của Quốc Tế CS - Trên có Bắc Việt CS và Trung Cộng bên hông có Miền quốc đang tiếp tay CS và Lào CS đoạt đường chuyên quân. Thêm nữa là ngay ở trong nước VNCH có cộng cụ của CS là cái gọi là MTCPMN, và một số đồng tay sai nằm vùng khác của chúng.

Với vị trí và hoàn cảnh ấy, VNCH không thể là một nước Trung lập.

Thêm nữa là Bắc Việt đã không Trung lập và CS quốc tế không bao giờ chấp nhận một tư cách Trung lập thực sự của họ mà chỉ đeo đuổi tham vọng thôn tính Miền Nam VN và toàn cõi Đông Nam Á, trước khi ngự trị toàn thế giới.

Trung lập cho toàn thể các nước Đông Nam Á cũng không thể được vì nó sẽ làm mất thăng bằng ở Đông Nam Á và nó sẽ rước họa xâm lăng của Đế Quốc CS để dành. Trái lại ở vùng Đông Nam Á các nước cần tích cực liên kết với nhau chặt chẽ hơn để mà tồn tại với tư cách Quốc gia độc lập trong một cộng đồng hợp tác và phát triển thịnh vượng.

Sở dĩ CS Bắc Việt đòi Trung lập hóa Miền Nam là để cô lập /ái hóa VNCH hầu để thôn tính. Và sở/có một vài nước đòi Trung lập hóa Đông Nam Á cũng chỉ là thủ đoạn chính trị của họ.

Bảo rằng Trung lập có nghĩa là tách ra khỏi sự tranh chấp của hai khối tự do và CS thì chiến tranh ở VN này sẽ chấm dứt, cũng như bảo rằng Liên Hiệp với CS để cùng nhau dẹp dẹp đi đến hòa bình thì sẽ có hòa bình, chỉ là khổ đại hoặc đồng lõa dạn dẫu cho CS thôn tính, không hơn không kém..."

Riêng đối với vấn đề lập Chính phủ Liên Hiệp với CS Tổng Thống nói :

"... Nếu có vị nào bảo rằng ở một số nước khác có Đảng CS và có Chính Phủ Liên Hiệp với CS được, thì tôi vẫn bảo rằng tại VN không thể chấp nhận Đảng CS và Liên hiệp với CS được. Vì như tôi đã giải thích, đó bởi vì vị trí của VN vì thực trạng nước VN, vì mưu đồ của CS xâm lăng tại vùng này mà chúng tôi biết rõ, vì những kinh nghiệm lịch sử đau thương mà chính chúng tôi đã sống..."

#### KẾT LUẬN :

Căn cứ trên những kinh nghiệm thực tế và trong các hoàn cảnh địa lý, chính trị và quân sự kể trên chúng ta có thể nhận thức rõ ràng lý do tại sao chúng ta không thể chấp nhận chế độ Trung lập dưới bất cứ hình thức nào bởi vì trung lập là tự bỏ tay mình để cho CS để bẻ thôn tính Miền Nam hay nói khác đi Trung lập chính là tự sát và tự nguyện đầu hàng CS và phải bồi lại công lao hy sinh của chính mình trong suốt 20 năm qua.

Để thay lời kết luận chúng tôi xin trích dẫn lời tuyên bố của Tổng Thống trong buổi nói chuyện ngày 26.1.1970 như sau :

"Dù còn trách nhiệm lãnh đạo quốc gia hay hết làm Tổng Thống tôi sẽ luôn luôn là người chống Cộng đến cùng vì tôi quan niệm rõ là dù 20 năm sau, hàng trăm năm sau nếu Miền Nam này có CS dưới hình thức nào thì Miền Nam này nếu không bị CS hoàn toàn bóp nghẹt chết từ tinh thần lạc vật chất thì cũng vì tinh thần bất khuất của dân tộc mà sẽ còn chiến tranh nội loạn triền miên. Có chiến tranh nội loạn triền miên thì không thể nào có một quốc gia mạnh để vươn mình trong tiến bộ và hạnh phúc. Chỉ bằng đang phải chấp nhận một chiến tranh xâm lược mà chúng ta đang thắng, đã gao thắng, sẽ thắng, chúng ta phải thắng dứt khoát để cũng có một nền hòa bình trong tự do dân chủ và hạnh phúc."